SELF PUBLISHER!™

★ MAGAZINE ★

A WRITTEN VIEW

IN THIS ISSUE

Gary Scott Beatty
Kristen Seymour
Felix Kiner
Victor Greywolf
Aghori Shaivite

SNEAK PEEKS!

THE CRUSADE TO CREATE CRUZADER

OMAR MORALES

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PUBLISHER

Ian Shires

EDITOR

Ellen Fleischer

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Jay Savage

CIRCULATION COORDINATOR

Douglas Owen

COVER ART

Paul Gulacy

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SELF PUBLISHER MAGAZINE

The Driving Force

Just blew past the 4th of July weekend as I write this, so now summer is in full swing. I've been watching a lot of World Cup Soccer and enjoying being able to take my computer outside, sit under our gazebo, and work on things. I've had the time to engage in some developmental trial and error, bring those thoughts and conclusions into conversation with a number of parties that will hopefully lead to even more solid system adjustments, and bring forth better community-building opportunity for us all. All of which simply means that there is still a lot of work to do, but these days, it seems we're finding more people interested in working together on solutions.

Of course, it all means nothing without action, and I've done some serious decision-making. Last issue, by the time I was done writing the POP Report column, I had contemplated that it would be the last one. I spent a lot of time this past month trying to work up a way to get an actual display of ALL new books coming out everywhere, into the SP! model of helping readers find out what is new and where to get it. It turns out that it really is as big a task as it sounds and, while I have some ideas about how we may be able to do it in the future, it simply is not going to be practical NOW. So our best bet is to include links to each distribution outlet in our display of NEW books, making it easy for people to follow through and go looking. We will try to make it as accessible as possible, until such a time as we come up with a better way logistically than my personally going to each site and adding info about each new book to our archives.

So, with no POP Report, and shying away from trying to list everything, what will I do instead? Well, you will see that in my new column: Distribution Alley. I will be going and taking a look at each place, and then telling SP! readers what caught my eye and WHY. I will talk about books, I will talk about distributors, I will ask questions and that I think many publishers are going to be interested in, and I will try to answer them.

OK! Well, this issue we have a slew of great stuff to present, so let's not waste any more time bantering. Hopefully, very soon, we will have our decisions made about print editions and other issues for SP! in our continued effort to become the best place for discovering great new stuff.

- Ian Shires

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The Crusade to Create Cruzader

An interview with Omar Morales

By: Steven Pennella

Omar Morales, a Catholic School kid from the 80s who grew up on comic books, video games, and Star Wars, trying to live the dream. As Omar says on his website, http://www.theforcemedia.com/creatorbio.html, "I have a very young family and I want to make them proud, but also leave them a legacy that they can continue into the future. The beauty about published works of fiction is that they can live forever and be adapted and re-adapted long after the original creator has died and gone to creator heaven."

SP!: Can you give us a brief rundown on how this idea came to you and the challenges of getting it produced?

OM: Around 2007, I started noodling with the idea for a hard-boiled detective story about a cop hunting the KKK in New Orleans. Then I morphed him into a bounty hunter working together with an exorcist on paranormal cases in the Bayou. Then I finally made him into an ex-priest forced to become a holy hitman for the Pope, working out of his home base at the Vatican.

The challenges have been many—primarily finding honest freelancers. I sued Atlantis Studios and won and then later, I had to fire a couple of shady colorists that put me years behind schedule.

SP!: Antonio de la Cruz struggles to find a higher calling and meaning in life and he seems to have some issues with his boss. Are there any particular people, fictional or otherwise, that helped you flesh him out for your graphic novel? Is he based in part on anyone you know?

OM: The protagonist, Antonio, is not based on anyone in particular. I will say his story was influenced by stories my dad told me about his days a seminarian, as well as my uncle, who finished his seminary studies and became a Jesuit priest. I learned fascinating stuff about the struggles of being human and striving to be a good example and leader as a man of the cloth.

SP!: This story is the middle part of a trilogy. When do we see sequels and prequels?

OM: For prequels, I'd like to collect a volume of five or six oneshots that go deeper on each of the main characters in the introductory story. Each of those supporting characters really deserves their own uncompressed origin story. I'd like to do that in the next couple of years. Sequels can go on forever, if there is a demand for them… As of now, I have ideas lined up, but no time table.

SP!: Talk about a high concept! Tell us a little about your goals when connecting with the reader.

OM: The concept seems to resonate very quickly for people; they just seem to get it right off the bat... which was my goal. I wanted to create a very digestible and entertaining action story for the modern, adult reader of graphic novels—guys like me that don't have a lot of free time.

I got great feedback from a guy at the gym who bought my book. He told me it was very entertaining and like nothing he's ever read in the realm of comics... Then he shocked me and said he let his daughters read it. It's an adult book, so I asked him why, and he said his daughters are grown, one in college, one a senior in high school and that they read stuff a lot racier than CruZader. That was great because that was my goal: entertaining, shareable, and unique in the marketplace. My demographic is everyone over 18, of any gender, creed or belief system. I've had positive feedback from people of all religions, as well as non-religious people and that's exactly what I wanted. I'm really enthusiastic about the reception I'm getting from readers.

SP!: In past interviews you mentioned wanting to leave behind something for your kids. Obviously, family is important to you, as is legacy. What is it in your background that makes you strive to leave a legacy?

OM: The day I graduated high school at the Paramount Theatre in Oakland, I remember looking up to the sky in my cap and gown and thinking that I had something to contribute to the world … I just had no idea what it was. But now I do. I have a family and a passion project that I can leave behind, whether I keel over tomorrow or decades from now. It's out there now and it can go on.

SP!: Following up on legacy: what would you like your family to do with these characters after you're gone?

OM: My kids are two very creative little people. They are so young, but already such great storytellers and presenters. My daughter is an old soul and could bring so much

heart, passion, and pathos to CruZader. My son could bring the technical skill to bring the story to life—he is very much into gaming and video, and he's only in kindergarten. Together, I could see them adapting CruZader as a CGI production, or even an old-fashioned 2D animation project.

SP!: CruZader was successfully funded on KickStarter, back in November 2013. Could you tell us a little bit about how you promoted the graphic novel while the campaign was running?

OM: I wouldn't recommend what I did on Kickstarter. I started it hastily and then had to fly off the seat of my pants to re-invent the campaign many times throughout the 60 days. I didn't land Paul Gulacy and Ray Dillon as contributing artists until after the campaign had started—I was very fortunate with the timing in both cases. Also about halfway through, I connected with the guys from AMC TV's Comic Book Men and did a couple of spots on their "I Sell Comics" podcast. That was huge for the campaign—those podcast spots are still paying dividends to this day, and there is more to come.

SP!: What were some of the highs and lows of the Kickstarter Campaign? Are you planning to do another Kickstarter?

OM: No plans for another Kickstarter right now. I'm too busy trying to launch CruZader for the direct market at comic shops all over the country. It solicits via Diamond Comics Distributors in July and hits the street in late September. That is consuming me right now.

The highs are when strangers dive in head-first, pledge your campaign and evangelize for you. Same goes for old friends you haven't seen in years and they go all in, no questions asked. The lows are when good friends, comic-book loving friends, completely ignore your campaign for no apparent reason. It is a bizarre psychological experiment—a complete rollercoaster of emotions.

SP!: What would you have done differently with Kickstarter, knowing what you know now?

OM: There is no question in my mind: do not spend one penny on the leeches that hang around Kickstarter campaigns offering "marketing support." I invested in a handful of these one-person operations and did not gain a single pledge out of any of them. Why? They don't know a thing about comics and they are in over their heads in general. There is zero value to be gained. It's better to sink some money into the video to give it some pizazz and production value; some people decide whether or not to pledge on the video alone, so it has to be short and catchy.

SP!: How did you get Paul Gulacy to draw a cover for you? Could you give us a little insight on how that happened?

OM: The courtship of Paul Gulacy lasted ten months. It started Christmas of 2012 and ended with him and me coming to terms in October 2013, smack in the middle of my Kickstarter campaign. I was so thrilled, as he is my very favorite artist in the medium. The key to a successful partnership with Paul was that I was patient and tenacious with a soft touch. He's a great dude and very fun to work with and banter with. We talk Raiders football quite a bit.

SP!: Did you ever back other comic-related projects on Kickstarter? If so, what interests you?

OM: I have backed all kinds of stuff on Kickstarter, mostly comics or comic-related stuff. I'm interested in supporting local creators or people that I know. My best Kickstarter story: one of my backers, George Wassil, was at the same con I was at, so I handed him his reward in person. That same day, I backed his graphic novel, "Oh Hell" on the day he made his goal. I also backed James Dunbar's scientifically accurate, rhyming graphic novel, "The Universe Verse." James is an Oakland guy; we ended up becoming friends and splitting a table at Big Wow Comics Fest.

SP!: You have a website, Twitter, Facebook and Tumblr. Out

of all the social media out there, which one is the best for interacting with your fans and getting the word out about you past and future projects?

OM: The best, by far, is Twitter; perhaps it's because it's the platform I'm most active with and most comfortable with. My website is not interactive by design; it's more of an evergreen holding tank for some basic information, like where to find me on social media and how to order the book.

SP!: As a creator, how fed up are you with Facebook throttling?

OM: I'm not too bothered, because I don't feel throttled, haha! I don't do a whole lot with Facebook or Tumblr, I just let my Twitter stuff feed into Facebook. My experience is this: if I really want to expand my reach and impressions, I have to pay for it with the Facebook ad service. I have used it before and will continue to do so. It's pretty cost-effective and robust.

SP!: Tell us about the convention scene, meeting fans, etc. What are some of the things indie creators should consider before they book their first show?

OM: I'd tell fellow indie creators to prepare for it like a business trip. Have all the details planned ahead of time: bring your folding dolly, bring your rations and water for the day in a brown bag, get a credit card reader that attaches to your phone, and be ready to stay on your feet to engage the public. The best thing to do is split the cost and the table with a fellow indie creator you know and trust. That way, you can take little breaks and cut your costs in half. Cons are fun. There is a very special vibe at cons. The last one I worked, I got to meet Mike Mignola, Mike Zeck, and what felt like the entire cast of Heroes of Cosplay from the SyFy Channel.

SP!: Have you split a comic convention table with a fellow Indie creator? If so, could you tell us about them and how it all played out? Would you try to find someone producing work for a similar audience as yours, or the opposite?

OM: James Dunbar and I split a table at Big Wow Comics fest and it worked out well for a number of reasons: he's a really cool dude, his book was very different from mine, and I was gone most of the day Saturday, while he was gone all of Sunday. We sold books on each other's behalf, and that can only happen through the magic of trust and a mutual vibe. We both did well. It was fun.

SP!: Tell us a little bit about how you obtained copyright and trademark for CruZader. Did you hire a lawyer or go through LegalZoom?

OM: I did both. A fraternity brother of mine, who is a tremendous support of CruZader, is a lawyer. He's helped me out here and there over the years and I owe him a great debt of gratitude. He blessed the LegalZoom services, which I invested in. When I had some issues tangling with the US Trademark Office on the mark for CruZader, he gave me some killer rebuttal material. No matter what, as an indie creator you do have to invest a fair bit of time researching and processing paperwork when you deal with the US copyright or trademark offices.

SP!: Tell us about your artists, colorists, and letterers. Do you guys work together via email, snail mail, or video-chat? Was CruZader a full script, or was it done Marvel-style?

OM: CruZader was full-script and many, many revised scripts. I'm not ashamed to say that I dictate almost every inch of every page, and why not? It's my baby. I work with my freelance team almost exclusively via e-mail, FTP servers, and DropBox. I've never spoken to any of them on the phone or via Skype. These guys have become like long distance friends in the Philippines, India, and on the East Coast. Only one of my guys is here in the Bay Area and he and I have never met or spoken on the phone either. But I feel like I know all them really well.

SP!: Some of your artists are from the Philippines and India? How did you find them? Were they on Facebook, DeviantArt, or some other source?

OM: I've worked with three guys from the Philippines. First and foremost is line artist Joel Cotejar, who has been with me from the beginning; we met through a mutually horrible experience with Atlantis Studios, where we were both getting ripped off. I was also lucky enough to land the great Rain Beredo (The Star Wars, Dark Horse) to do the colors for the cover, and I was connected to him via Paul Gulacy, who nudged me in his direction. All the other color work was done by my man Mike Dolce from New York, and we met via Twitter. I put out the call for help after firing two guys and he came to the rescue. My web guru, Gaurav Sharma, reached out to me and offered his services when he saw an article about CruZader at comicbookmovie.com. He lives in India and had no way to pledge the Kickstarter campaign, so we worked out a deal on SEO and Web design. I don't think I've ever successfully hired anyone from DeviantArt, although I did use Craigslist to find my local graphic designer and my pre-press guy.

SP!: You pride yourself on using old-school pencil and ink artists versus computer-based art. Does holding an original piece of art versus a tiff file make it more real to you and the artists you hire? Since your artists are all work-for-hire do they ship originals to you, or do they keep them?

OM: There is a YouTube video of me opening the 11x17 cover art from Paul Gulacy when it came in the mail. I look like a kid at Christmas, unwrapping the greatest gift of all: comic book art! It is old fashioned, but man is it cool to see the hand-crafted work of a master

like Gulacy… way more exciting than opening an e-mail attachment. Joel Cotejar is fantastic on pencils and inks, but he lives in the Philippines, so he keeps all the originals. The only time I ask Joel to send originals is when they are commissions for customers that I find for him.

SP!: If this becomes the next big AMC show, will your fellow creators share in the profits or are they work for hire?

OM: I am the sole creator and financier of CruZader and have felt 100 percent of the brunt of that responsibility for the last seven years. My team all freelance for me under work-for-hire agreements, but I will tell you that if CruZader is wildly successful, they will all get a little somethin' somethin' from me, unsolicited. Their work and dedication deserves recognition, monetary or otherwise. I started out as nothing more than a writer with an idea, and my team of artists were all very patient with me as I grew into a producer, an editor, a publisher, a marketer, an advertiser, and a businessman that had to nurture healthy, mutually-beneficial partnerships along the way.

Line art: Joel CotejarColors: Mike Dolce

Letters: Jaymes Reed

Logos/graphics: Etienne Andlau

Copyeditor: Joel Edelman

Pre-press: Eric Neylon

Web site: Gaurav Sharma

Audio engineer: Matt Stein

Legal: Chris Rivera, Esquire

Fan club: My family

SP!: Just for fun, let's say your story is sold to AMC or HBO, or optioned as a feature film. Who would you cast in the live action version?

OM: Wow, now you're asking me to be really optimistic, but I'll indulge you and the SP! readers! The guy I would really like to play the lead character, CruZader, is a guy called Rupert Friend from Showtime's "Homeland." He has a cool mystery and danger in his eyes that would be perfect for the role… he would just need to learn a European Spanish accent. There is also Pedro Pascal from "Game of Thrones," but he would be even more perfect for the role of CruZader's ornery pilot and sidekick, Fox. Last but not least, in the role of the Pope himself, would be the great Alan Arkin. He has the perfect temperament for the way the Pope plays in my story.

SP!: Last but not least, tell us where we can purchase and see your work.

OM: My preference is for people to ask their local comic book shop to order the CruZader graphic novel from Diamond Comics Distributors. The book will list in July and will land in local shops all over the country in late September (Diamond order code: # JUL141266).

I make a lot more money selling direct from my Web site, but I'm not in this for the money. I want people all over the country to have this epic 144-page hardcover book at a fair price ($19.99) from their local shop. My Kickstarter campaign allowed me to reach people in 11 different countries and that is an amazing feeling! If I can have success in the US, then it gives me a platform to pursue more international avenues. CruZader has a heavy European slant and I can imagine there would be demand for it in Portugal, Spain, Italy, and beyond.

ComiXology and ComicsFix should also have digital versions of CruZader available this summer. I'm wrapping up the digital version now and plan to submit it to both platforms soon, so people can probably expect to see at both sites/apps by August.

In terms of social media, I'm on all the sites. Easiest thing to do is search "CruZader" and I'll be there waiting with open arms:

Twitter: @TheCruZader

Facebook: El.CruZader

Tumblr: The CruZader Comic

Pinterest: The CruZader

Instagram: The_CruZader

Vine: TheCruZader

B. Alex Thompson
Creator of ChiSai, Vampires Unlimited, & Chaos Campus: Sorority Girls vs. Zombies
Celebrating the upcoming comic & graphic novel projects Hass, Southern Hospitality, & Flesh for the Unborn
Wizard World Sacramento March 7-9, 2014
WonderCon Anaheim April 18-20, 2014
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Long Beach Comic-Con September 27-28, 2014
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THE UNKNOWN SON SHALL BECOME THE FATHER.
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HOW SWEET ...

WITH HIS INTELLIGENCE CONTACTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL SPY GAME, HE IS PART 007.

THE SOUND ...

THANKS TO HIS TRADITIONAL ATTIRE, SOME THINK HE IS PART WIZARD.

... THAT SAVED A WRETCH LIKE ME ...

HE IS A PARANORMAL INVESTIGATOR OF THE HIGHEST ORDER ...

... BUT TONIGHT HE SHALL BE A BACKWOODS BRAWLER.

♫ I WAS BLIND, BUT NOW, I SEE ♫
THE KU KLUX KLAN -- THE ORIGINAL BOYS IN THE HOOD.
FOR WELL OVER A CENTURY, THEY HAVE TERRORIZED THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY WITH VILE, HATEFUL ATTACKS.
THE KKK IS A SWORN ENEMY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

T'WAS ...
IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER ...
GRACE ...
AND OF THE SON ...
THAT ...
AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ...
AMEN.
TAUGHT ...
MY HEART ...
FEAR!
THUMP

SNEAK PEEK!

CRUSADER

CRACKLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE

YOU WILL NOT HARM THIS MAN!

UNTIE HIM! NOW!

OLD SOLDIERS
ZEIN
TRAIL
WINTER CITY
EXPERIENCE
THE ALL NEW
CLOUD 9 COMIX
ON IOS,
ANDROID &
KINDLE FIRE
THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE GALLOWS
THE MIGHTY TITAN
JINN WARRIORS
DYNAGIRL
INFINITY
CLOUD
COMIX

A WRITTEN VIEW

Closing Your Story

Navigating the submission process

By Douglas Owen

Everyone touts "perfecting the first five". The first five words need to work. The first five sentences need to work. The first five paragraphs need to work. And so on. But what about your ending?

Yes, people read the prose you write in order to get a story, but your ending? Does it make sense? Is there disconnect from the start to the finish? Will the reader feel you copped out?

I look at all those great literary geniuses from years gone by and wonder about poor endings. Look back in history and see what I'm talking about.

DAVID COPPERFIELD:

This amazing read will have you gasping. You laugh, cry, and think a faint is just around the corner. After reading the book's start and middle, you come to the end, where David marries a wise woman and succeeds in life. And from that point on you die of boredom.

WUTHERING HEIGHTS:

Much praised as being a literary masterpiece, this book holds the distinct pleasure of being one I avoided in Grade 10 English. After all the passion between Catherine and Heathcliff, who cares about all the back-and-forth banter of their dull children? And alas, such drivel is the major content of half the book.

SONG OF THE LARK:

The novel shows us how Thea, from the dusty a little town in Colorado, becomes a Wagnerian soprano. She joins the Metropolitan Opera. But Cather, like Dickens, decided to describe the young person's apotheosis to no end. Really? Why? In the final chapters, all the characters do is talk. Even after accepting a proposal from a man, the transaction between the two is dry and clipped.

The point is, there are many books out there that people consider literary masterpieces, but they have such poor endings as to make you want to gouge your eyes out rather than finish them. So what do you do about it?

First, sit back and don't fret. If critiques of the manuscript are coming back as "Great work, hate the ending," then you have to work on that one part. Is there a solid conclusion (not to be confused with cliff-hangers for multiple-novel series)? Have you tied up all the loose ends or left open questions for the readers to discover? Has anyone died that suddenly reappears at the end? I'm not saying not to leave a few loose ends. In fact, doing so will invite the reader's mind into a discussion of grace. But major issues need to be closed.

The easiest way to incorporate closure is the bookend structure. You end the story where it starts. The characters' personalities and lives have progressed, and hopefully in a meaningful way. This is something you have to decide.

Perhaps, some object that appears at the start of the book, or throughout the manuscript, appears at the end. Or maybe a similar incident happens. The same snatch of dialogue used to open the book repeats itself. All this can happen with an ironic meaning attached. Thus the story becomes one of a full circle.

Anything can serve to define the end of the work.

Don't forget, closure is not always found in life. The 'realistic' stories have comedies that don't end with a wedding. And tragedies do not start with one, either. Think of the story as a circle: nothing really starts nor ends. Life goes on. Remember, we see Hercules in the stars. Closure only satisfies your mind's need to see a pattern.

Take one of my soon-to-be published short stories (little bit of selfish self-promotion

here) in my book Inside My Mind. The story is called "From Three to Four". It is a science fiction piece that starts with a child called Four training to take over from an old man called Three. We go through a lot of little twists and turns, only to end up with Four an old man and a young Five training to take over from him. Full circle. I left a lot of loose ends for the reader to explore, but the story is fully self-contained.

This is the meaning of using the start as an end. You will find a lot of great works using this type of journey for their stories. It is a classic and should not be discounted.

All this is great—if you keep up the pacing of your story. If you can keep the pace of your story going, people will forget to put the book down. Work will be missed, bus connections ignored, and flights delayed, as your reader gets lost in your narrative. How can you tell if this happens? Feedback.

A Spear in Flight, my first young adult book, came back with reports of "My daughter would not put it down," and "He read it three times in a month". It tells me the pace was good. The reader was entertained. And the target audience found the piece enthralling.

You could say "You've been writing for a long time and even teach about it," to put your mind at ease. But that will not help you. Here is a basic formula for you to look at:

Description or Exposition | Dialogue and/or Action | Reflection

Let's look at using this to start a story.

Sample Text	Element
The sun beat down on the vast expanse of the Martian landscape.	Exposition and description
John's head whipped around. His hand trembled. "What is that?"	Dialogue and action
I could only think of the falsehoods represented by the three men before me.	Reflection

Now we keep repeating the cycle. The story starts to make sense. We don't care which one starts the story, so long as it does. You could even have one part take control of the story momentarily. Say there is a large interaction between characters; that would be controlled by dialogue. Just don't have them stand there and talk, make sure they do something as well.

By using the formula, you can tell if a story is getting out of sync with itself. Use the talking example. Have characters shuffle their feet, cough, pick their nose or fart. Have them do something that will add to the scene. So, if you must have someone stand at the cocktail party in order to deliver important information, make sure there is something happening, like a tray of canopies' being dropped or a glass being emptied. Nothing puts people to sleep more than an info dump.

A GOOD EXAMPLE:

"Really? I thought he was boring," Janis said.

"But nothing could be done about it," Peter said.

"Are you sure?" Janis asked.

"Very," Peter responded.

If done over a number of pages, writing like the above will have your reader snoozing in no time. Try this instead.

"Really?" Janis leaned forward, hoping to catch a hint of the scandal.

"But nothing could be done about it," Peter said.

Janis hated him for saying such. Something could always be done about a man having a heart attack. "Are you sure?"

"Very." Peter waved his cigarette like a baton.

The two exchanges use the same dialogue, but one reads like you are there, while in the other, you might as well be listening in on a conversation with your back turned. Which one would you rather read?

Follow the formula, bring your book's ending to a logical conclusion, and sit back to reap the benefits of a wel-written manuscript.

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IV ARMAGEDDON

The Battle Begins...
August 2014

Coming to
Cloud 9 Comix

A Look at Number One

Gary Scott Beatty

By: Jay Savage

Don't know Gary Scott Beatty? Well, he is one of the hardest working creators in indie comics and a champion of the craft! I had the opportunity to ask Gary a few questions about his accomplishments and over 30 year career in comics. Gary Scott Beatty is a creator worth knowing and acknowledging as a driving force behind the indie comics scene.

A recipient of the Xeric Grant, Gary Scott Beatty read his first comic book, a beat-up, old, Tintin hardcover, in his grade school library some time before the 60s Batman craze. The first alternative comic he produced (they were called "underground" then) was on his high school's mimeograph machine. Nearly three decades later, the tools and format have changed, but Gary is still producing printed pieces that communicate and entertain.

SP! WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT DO YOU DO?

GSB: I'm Gary Scott Beatty, editor and publisher at Aazurn Publishing, Xeric Grant-winning author and illustrator, and colorist and letterer for the comics industry.

SP!: Why do you do what you do?

GSB: I've been in printing and publishing all my life, from the days of cutting Rubylith by hand for color and setting type on Compugraphic typesetting machines, through the rise of Photoshop, Illustrator, and page layout programs, to today, where I publish a local online magazine and offer comics through Diamond Distributing.

My latest book, Number One, is a done-in-one-issue story exploring 50 years of comic book history through the eyes of a comic shop owner. Number One is drawn and inked by Aaron Warner, whose Adventures of Aaron comics became a critically-acclaimed newspaper strip that ran for over ten years, was read by over six million newspaper subscribers, and garnered a Reuben Award nomination from the National Cartoonist Society. I helped him color those Sunday strips.

Number One can be ordered now at your local or online comic shop worldwide, through Diamond Distributors, Aazurn Publishing, order no. JUL140749. You need to order an indie comic to make sure your shop carries it!

SP!: WHAT'S YOUR BACKGROUND?

GSB: The first alternative comic I produced was on my high school's ditto machine, after hours, without permission. I wrote copy for an ad agency, set type and ran stat camera for a newspaper, was an editor and designer for another newspaper, set type and designed for a printer, then edited and designed a local magazine. For several years in there, I was front man for a punk band. All this time I was drawing and painting.

In the late 90s I began coloring and lettering for the comic book industry. I began Aazurn publishing and sold comics through Diamond Distributors in 2008. That same year, I landed a Xeric grant to publish Jazz: Cool Birth, a jazz club murder mystery with art inspired by 50s album cover design.

I began publishing Indie Comics Magazine in 2011 and, since then, have published eight, plus two Indie Comics Horror books and three books under the Indie Comics Magazine Presents banner.

SP!: CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT INDIE COMICS MAGAZINE?

GSB: For years, indie creators have wondered if there wasn't some way to inexpensively expand their customer base. That's exactly what I'm offering creators here at Aazurn Publishing through Indie Comics Magazine.

Creators buy in for one eighth of the publication to feature their eight page, done-in-one story, and receive one eighth of the Diamond payment back. Page one of their story features a short bio with contact information. Contact info is also featured in the index, on the last page of their story, AND online at Indie Comics Magazine.com, where extended biographies click through to their websites.

We always print at least 1,000 books, so if Diamond orders come in below that, we split the remaining books between creators. This obviously isn't for everyone, but creators get work in print and copies to sell or give away at conventions. I end up turning down most of the submissions, so this isn't just a buy-in; there needs to be a level of quality to the art and solid storytelling abilities.

Interested creators should read through the Submissions page by clicking on "submissions" at Indie Comics Magazine.com. http://indiecomicsmagazine.com/

SP!: HOW DO YOU WORK? WHAT ROUTINES DO YOU HAVE?

GSB: It is absolutely essential for anyone in publishing to work from a calendar. My work load is all over the place, so I have to be organized, but, like most creative people, I'm not naturally organized, so I have a big calendar I fill out. Today's date says, "Answer questions for interview." Then it has some steps on it for me to contact retailers about Number One because, as of this writing, it's the day after July's Previews came out. Then I have a lettering job to do. I have a couple of coloring jobs I expect to come in, and when they do, I'll schedule them. I still have to finish coding my local, online magazine, but all of those articles are coded and approved.

So, I just get up in the morning and look at the calendar. If there's a blank day, that's a day to go through contacts to look for more work.

SP!: WHAT'S INTEGRAL TO THE WORK YOU DO?

GSB: Two important phrases to live by: Consistency is the key to good design. All marketing begins with a list.

SP!: WHAT HAS BEEN A SEMINAL EXPERIENCE FOR YOU?

GSB: MY PARENTS REALLY PUSHED ENJOYING THE CREATIVE WORK OF OTHERS. MARRIAGE TO A SMART, BEAUTIFUL WOMAN FOCUSED ME. HAVING HAPPY KIDS HELPED RELEASE MY OWN INNER KID.

SP!: HOW HAS YOUR CRAFT CHANGED OVER TIME WITH, LET'S SAY, CHANGES IN TECHNOLOGY?

GSB: I studied painting in college, but was never completely satisfied with the results. Now, when I color with Photoshop, or illustrate using Illustrator, I know I've found my tools.

SP!: WHAT CREATOR DO YOU MOST IDENTIFY WITH?

GSB: I identify with every creator who is out there trying to make a living selling their work. Even Walt Disney started with his brother in a garage. That's why I started Indie Comics Magazine. I have skills unique to most creators: the ability to move artwork from studio to publication, the marketing background to make a bit of headway in this oversaturated market, and a bullheaded attitude that tends to move things forward.

SP!: WHAT WORK DO YOU MOST ENJOYING DOING?

GSB: Any day I look at the calendar and there is a creative task there that pulls in money is a good day. I'm not a hobbyist and, like it or not, capitalism defines a creator's worth and value in America. I know many would disagree with that, but few can deny that great feeling you get selling a piece at a convention, that confirmation that someone values your work.

This belief also means you spend money to help support others. Even if they're there to sell their own products, I can't understand anyone who goes to a convention and doesn't buy indie books.

SP!: WHAT'S YOUR STRONGEST COMIC-BOOK RELATED MEMORY FROM YOUR CHILDHOOD?

GSB: I'm a bit of an oddball, in that the first comic I remember is a well-loved (meaning beat up) Tintin hardcover I found in grade school. I loved Hergé's careful little drawings, his sense of color, and the adventures.

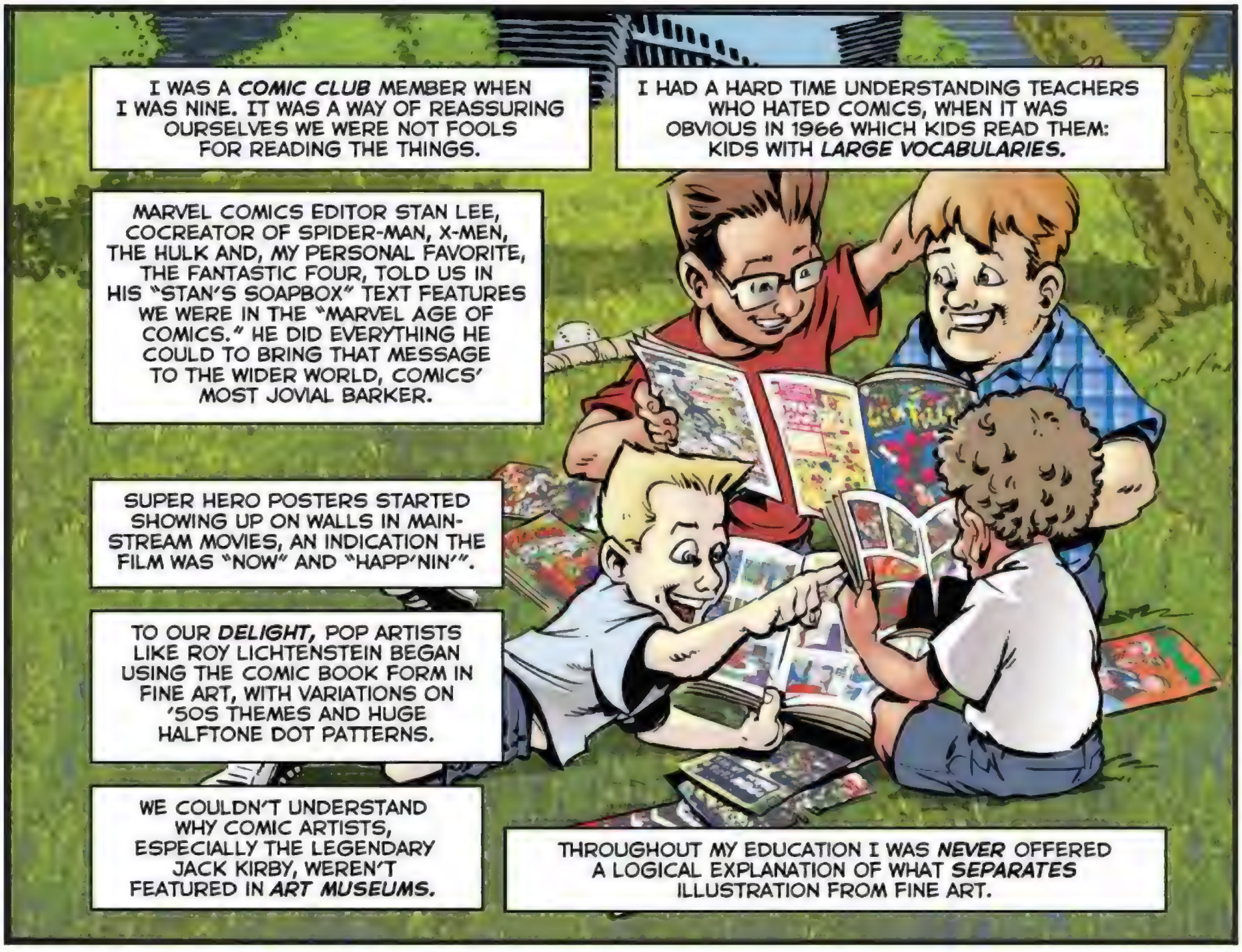
The Batman craze in 1966 made a pretty strong impression on me, mainly because it brought comic books into mainstream society in a positive, even silly, way. It occurs to me now, that America was finally breaking out of the fear of comics imposed on us by the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency in the mid-50s. No wonder that Batman was such a goof-ball: he needed to distance himself from the 50s EC comics.

The head shops I visited in the early 70s to buy my comics were an experience way different than standing at a spinner rack in a drug store. Robert Crumb, Gilbert Shelton, S. Clay Wilson, Spain Rodriguez, and many more pushed the definition of the comic book. Readers today may not realize the impact Heavy Metal Magazine had on comics in 1977. I had stopped buying comics when I saw Heavy Metal at a friend's apartment in college. I had never seen such perfect printing in those pre-computer days, ever—especially in a comic book with beautiful, bright solids and no missed registration. Philippe Druillet, Moebius, Enki Bilal, Richard Corben — great stuff in those early books, beyond both superheroes and the undergrounds.

My happiest comic book memory and strongest comic-related emotion is reading them aloud to my kids.

SP!: WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE PERSONAL WORK, TO DATE?

GSB: Number One says everything I want to say about why I love comic books and pays respect to retailers, those people on the front lines who sell our books. If you've lived through 50 years of comics, you'll chuckle with recognition. If you haven't,


I WAS A *COMIC CLUB* MEMBER WHEN I WAS NINE. IT WAS A WAY OF REASSURING OURSELVES WE WERE NOT FOOLS FOR READING THE THINGS.
I HAD A HARD TIME UNDERSTANDING TEACHERS WHO HATED COMICS, WHEN IT WAS OBVIOUS IN 1966 WHICH KIDS READ THEM: KIDS WITH *LARGE VOCABULARIES.*
MARVEL COMICS EDITOR STAN LEE, COCREATOR OF SPIDER-MAN, X-MEN, THE HULK AND, MY PERSONAL FAVORITE, THE FANTASTIC FOUR, TOLD US IN HIS "STAN'S SOAPBOX" TEXT FEATURES WE WERE IN THE "MARVEL AGE OF COMICS." HE DID EVERYTHING HE COULD TO BRING THAT MESSAGE TO THE WIDER WORLD, COMICS' MOST JOVIAL BARKER.
SUPER HERO POSTERS STARTED SHOWING UP ON WALLS IN MAIN-STREAM MOVIES, AN INDICATION THE FILM WAS "NOW" AND "HAPP'NIN'".
TO OUR *DELIGHT,* POP ARTISTS LIKE ROY LICHTENSTEIN BEGAN USING THE COMIC BOOK FORM IN FINE ART, WITH VARIATIONS ON '50S THEMES AND HUGE HALFTONE DOT PATTERNS.
WE COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY COMIC ARTISTS, ESPECIALLY THE LEGENDARY JACK KIRBY, WEREN'T FEATURED IN *ART MUSEUMS.*
THROUGHOUT MY EDUCATION I WAS *NEVER* OFFERED A LOGICAL EXPLANATION OF WHAT *SEPARATES* ILLUSTRATION FROM FINE ART.

you can take a look at them through the eyes of someone trying to keep a comic shop afloat. Number One explores the real-life value of comic books and the heroes in them.

Number One is definitely my most well-reviewed comic, to date. John Jackson Miller called it "a great read". Cliff Biggers, owner of Dr. No's Comics and editor of Comic Shop News, wrote, "I hope everyone who's ever worked in a comic shop, patronized a comic shop, or dreamed of owning a comic shop gives this book a read – they'll be glad they did!"

SP!: HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT OTHER CREATORS IN THE COMIC BOOK INDUSTRY?

GSB: Honestly, I just love being around comic book people. I've only met a couple I'd classify as petty among, perhaps, thousands I've been in contact with. There's something about people who create and people who enjoy other people's creations that make them easy to be around.

SP!: WHAT EXACTLY IS COMIC ARTISTS DIRECT AND WHAT ROLE DO YOU PLAY THERE?

GSB: Comic Artists Direct features a library of informative articles to enlighten and entertain, and websites for Scott Rosema, Bill Bryan, me, James Lyle, Mike Roy, and Anthony Cacioppo. This was a very early incarnation of Indie Comics Magazine.com. I'm webmaster and editor there.

SP!: WHAT ROLE DOES SOMEONE IN YOUR POSITION PLAY IN COMIC BOOK CULTURE?

GSB: I've been paid to edit, write, illustrate, color, letter, produce, and promote comics. So, I guess I have all the bases covered, other

A HIPPIE NAMED FRANKLIN BROUGHT ME CLOSER TO REALIZING I DIDN'T NEED TO WRITE, DRAW OR PUBLISH COMICS TO BE AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE BUSINESS.
AMONG THE BLACK LIGHT POSTERS, TIE DIED T-SHIRTS AND SMOKING PARAPHERNALIA IN FRANKLIN'S HEAD SHOP WERE UNDERGROUND COMICS, INDEPENDENTLY PUBLISHED BOOKS FEATURING DISJOINTED, STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS STORIES FROM ROBERT CRUMB, GILBERT SHELTON, RICK GRIFFIN AND OTHERS.
WITHOUT THE LOOSE NETWORK OF PRIVATELY OWNED HEAD SHOPS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY TO SELL THE UNDERGROUNDS, THEY WOULD HAVE QUICKLY *DISAPPEARED.*

than selling and printing the things.

SP!: WHAT'S YOUR SCARIEST OR MOST EMBARRASSING EXPERIENCE IN LIFE OR COMICS?

GSB: I was a punk musician in the late 70s, half naked, playing clubs with puke on the floor and bars on the windows. Nothing in the comic book industry has scared or embarrassed me, so far.

SP!: DESCRIBE A REAL-LIFE SITUATION OR PERSON THAT HAS INSPIRED YOU?

GSB: There is so much you can learn just keeping your mouth shut and listening.

Scott (August) Rosema pointed out to me early on the graceful word balloons in older comics—not round, but subtle, rounded rectangles. Now, I always notice the indie books whose authors don't pay attention to detail — the typography is the first to suffer, with awkward circles and triangular tails impaling characters.

I absorbed a lot of great info from Gary (Deadworld) Reed, standing at a table next to him many years ago, at a convention about publishing. Gary ran Caliber Comics, one of the leading indie comic companies of the 90s. I was buying Caliber books in their heyday and can honestly say I never read one that wasn't thoughtful and professional.

My wife co-owns a small business with her brother: Quigley Draperies, which creates custom window coverings. There are eerie parallels with her business and comics — increased competition from large corporations that can only be countered with personal service, for instance. I thought I knew what I was doing before I started listening to Carol, her brother, her father, and her mother. This taught me that many business problems are not unique to comic book publishing.

SP!: WHAT MEMORABLE RESPONSES HAVE YOU HAD TO YOUR WORK?

GSB: The most striking reactions come from adults who discover a book like Jazz: Cool Birth and you can see it in their faces; the realization that comic books can be so much more than spandex-clad muscle men.

SP!: WHAT FOOD, DRINK, AND/OR SONG INSPIRES YOU?

GSB: It took me a lot longer than others my age to become bored with the current music scene. I listened to current music right up through grunge, before working my way backward from what I knew. First, I dug into 60s psychedelic, then worked my way back from there to 50s cool jazz. We were doing everything possible to distance ourselves from our parents' culture, but cool jazz has more to do with rock than the jazz before it—your basic five-piece band. Just substitute electric guitar for trumpet or sax and you have rock. Cool jazz even started those excruciatingly long solos that carried into rock music.

SP!: IS THE CREATIVE LIFE LONELY? WHAT DO YOU DO TO COUNTERACT IT?

GSB: I have friends. You can't create in a bubble. Everything I've ever written about has been inspired by experiences outside of my home.

SP!: WHAT RESEARCH DO YOU DO WHEN TACKLING A NEW PROJECT?

GSB: Most of what I write is historical fiction, so I do a lot of research from the usual sources — books, video, first-hand accounts. A good deal of the time, the research will come first. I'll see something in history that would make an interesting story and work from there.

You have to be careful as a writer to not let the facts get in the way of a good story. A lot of (maybe most) historical fiction lumbers along, looking for a thread to hold it together, but history isn't that way. You have to logically connect events so they're meaningful and exciting.

I say "history," but my stories don't involve the big events. They're about people and those people are representative of societal norms in that time period. It bugs me when I see something that's supposed to be historical fiction, but the people don't think, act, or talk like people would in that time. Writers screw that up pretty regularly. You have to be able to crawl into the heads of your characters and understand them in historical context. That's what makes Mad Men so brilliant and Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves so ridiculous.

SP!: WHAT SUPERPOWER WOULD YOU HAVE AND WHY?

GSB: Sleep is fun, but it gets in the way of doing things. I'd be Sleepless Man.

SP!: NAME SOMETHING YOU LOVE AND WHY.

GSB: The secret of life is enjoying the passage of time. I try to be here now, enjoy the moment, and not play favorites.

SP!: WHAT IS YOUR DREAM PROJECT AND, PROFESSIONALLY, WHAT IS YOUR GOAL?

GSB: I'm doing what I always wanted to do and what I've planned to do my whole life. True, more financial success would be more satisfying, but I've always been an indie guy, so that's not entirely feasible. I'm living the dream.

SP!: NAME THREE CREATORS YOU ADMIRE.

ARE YOU *INSANE?* HOW CAN YOU SUCCEED AT A BUSINESS THAT SELLS 50¢ PRODUCTS?
LOOK, HIS ASKING PRICE IS GENEROUS. I CAN CARRY TOYS AND SPORT CARDS, TOO!
GWEN WAS RIGHT. THE LATE '70S HAD BEEN A *DISASTER* FOR DEALERS, READERS AND PUBLISHERS.
600,000,000 COMICS WERE CIRCULATED IN 1959. BY 1978 IT HAD DROPPED TO 250,000,000.
IN ONE DAY, DC COMICS UNEXPECTEDLY SLASHED OVER 30 PERCENT OF THEIR LINE, THE "DC IMPLOSION."
MARVEL COMICS FACED BANKRUPTCY AFTER TRYING TO EXPAND INTO MAINSTREAM MAGAZINE PUBLISHING.
IT'S A *GREAT* TIME TO OPEN A COMIC SHOP!
IT LOOKED LIKE A *LOUSY* TIME TO OPEN A COMIC SHOP.

GSB: I am nothing like these people, but anyone in the creative community has to admire what they accomplished with their lives. This is nothing about the corporations that sprang from their ideas; my admiration is for the individuals as creators.

I always admired Stan Lee's ability to communicate, to pump people up about things, and to make them laugh.

Walt Disney did many, many amazing things. A great story I'll paraphrase was told by his niece, I believe, who was a kid recovering in the hospital. Walt came in and told her the story of Pinocchio, when the movie was in production—just the two of them in her room. She said when she saw the cartoon, she was disappointed. We all know what an incredible animated movie Pinocchio was, but in this little girl's mind, the picture didn't measure up to Uncle Walt's storytelling abilities.

I feel an affinity with Charles (Peanuts) Schulz, like we were related. He completely changed how Americans viewed humor, in a fairly gentle, subtle way. He wrote himself onto the page and people loved it. Until he died, and I saw the outpouring of emotion from the comic book community, I didn't realize so many readers felt exactly like I did.

Mr. Beatty thank you very much for taking the time to speak with Self Publisher! Magazine. I completely enjoyed interviewing you and I know our readers will enjoy this interview just as much!

You can find more from Gary Scott Beatty at the following links.

Order Number ONE from July 2014's Previews catalog under Aazurn Publishing. JUL140749

www.facebook.com/garyscottbeatty

garyscottbeatty.blogspot.com/

indiecomicsmagazine.com/

Felix Kiner & Kristen Seymour of ComicsFix

By: Louise Cochran-Mason

Launched in 2013, ComicsFix is a subscription-based digital library for digital comic books. The basic concept is that for a flat monthly fee, readers can read as many comics and graphic novels as they want (rather than paying per comic). They host a wide array of comics from over 250 publishers (including Alterna, Blue Water Comics, and Asylum Press). They have apps to allow their content to be viewed on a range of devices (the app was positively reviewed by users on Google Play).

ComicsFix subscriptions are currently $9.95 per month (there is a free trial available). Like Netflix, content can viewed for the duration of the subscription —content is viewed and not downloaded. The service is meant for all ages and there are parental control options. They are open to submissions from publishers of any genre of comic (or graphic novel or webcomic) and are actively looking to expand their library as well as their readership. They have a "Payout Share Percentage" system they use to calculate a publisher's share.

Sp! spoke to Felix Kiner and Kristen Seymour of ComicsFix

SP! WHO IS THE TEAM BEHIND COMICSFIX?

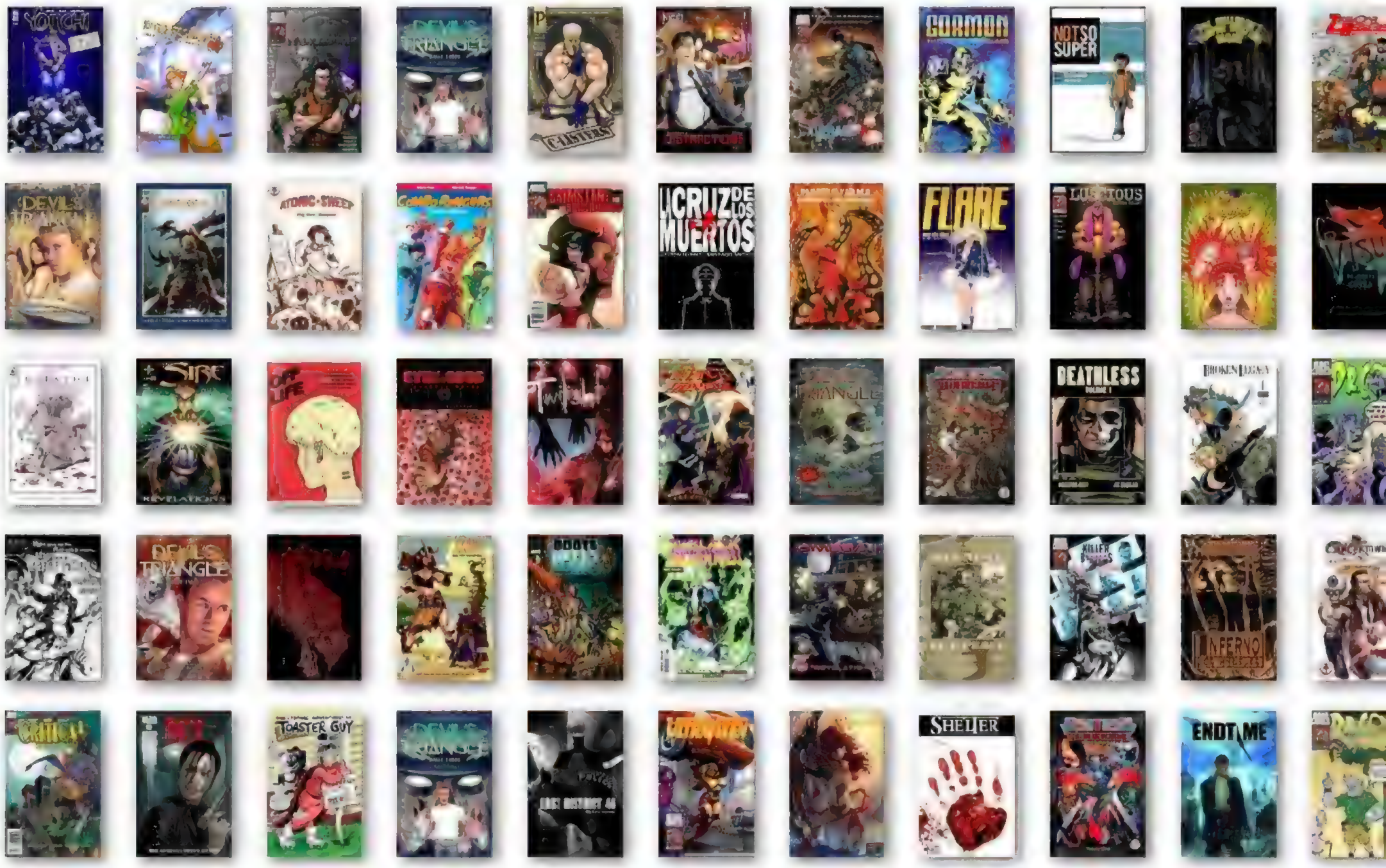
Kristen: We are a small team of dedicated comic book fans and creators with a brilliant tech team supporting us. Some of us are parents, some of us are fresh out of college, some of us work for ComicsFix only when we're not at our day-job, but we all have one thing in common: a passion to reinvent the way comics are shared around the world.

Felix: Most of our team is Los Angeles-based, but we are truly an international team. I personally was born in Russia. Our team has people from other parts of the States, Canada, Colombia, India, and Ukraine. Our intention is to go after an international, multilingual audience as soon as we establish ourselves in English-speaking countries. Our team reflects this desire very well.

SP!: WHAT'S YOUR BACKGROUND AND HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN COMICS?

Felix: I am an artist and designer. I've worked many years in multimedia, web design, illustration, production design, and as a storyboard artist. I am very new to comic books, as a reader and as an artist/writer. My entry to comics I blame on faith and one very cool individual named Jim Higgins. I live ten minutes away from Meltdown Comics. It's not your regular comic shop. It is home to weekly live events: Nerdist podcast, standup comedy nights, and the so called Meltdown University. MU has several classes teaching everything comics: writing, drawing, inking, coloring, and even marketing for comics. Jim Higgins is the founder and the teacher at MU. Jim is a former DC Comics editor, writer and longtime art educator. I was frequenting Meltdown for its comedy standup open mics on Sundays. I saw an ad about Jim's upcoming class, I went for it, and I loved it. For a long time, I was looking to challenge myself artistically. It was a 12-week class, where we had to write and/or draw a 10-page minicomic. It was truly an eye-opener. Comics had everything I needed creatively: storytelling, art, character development. By the end of the class, I completed my first short, 'Polaris' (which I funded on Kickstarter later), and made great friends, including Kristen.

Kristen: Yep. I've been writing fiction as long as I've been able to form sentences. There is something about storytelling that has always fascinated and attracted me, no matter the medium. When I started reading comics as a teenager, I was mesmerized by the love affair between images and words that really is unique to the art form. To me, it was the love child of film and literature—two of my favourite things. In school, I tried out screenwriting, poetry, fiction, and so on, but I never felt fulfilled creatively. In 2012, I attended MorrisonCon in Las Vegas and it was there, amid some of the greatest minds in comics, that the light bulb went off for me. On my return home, I looked for a means to learn more about the craft and fortunately, I found Jim Higgins at Meltdown Comics. At the end of the very first class, we were given 20 minutes to draw a comic from start to finish. (As a writer, you can bet I draw some pretty epic stick figures)



When the exhilaration of completing that daunting task wore off, I knew I had found my niche. With Jim's guidance and expertise, and the support of my classmates I am grateful to have met, I completed the script for a 19-page comic, 'DMT'. Felix joined with me to bring the project to life and, as they say, the rest is history. DMT is almost complete and will be published on ComicsFix very soon.

SP!: FELIX, YOU RAN A SUCCESSFUL KICKSTARTER CAMPAIGN FOR YOUR POLARIS AND THE EXTRA MAN PROJECTS. CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT THE PROJECTS? (WILL YOU BE CONTINUING WITH THE FRANCHISES IN THE FUTURE?)

Felix: Polaris and The Extra Man are one-shots. Perhaps I can revisit the characters from those books, but not in the near future. Both books have humor and science fiction blended together. This is my voice, I guess. Both books are available on ComicsFix.

SP!: WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO RUN A CROWD-FUNDING CAMPAIGN?

Felix: I wanted to give my books the best audience and nothing beats crowd-funding community. I am myself a backer on many projects. It feels great to support a project. It feels amazing to get support. Total strangers from around the globe are betting on you. This made my books even more special for me.

SP!: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE WANTING TO RUN A CROWD-FUNDING CAMPAIGN?

Felix: Keep your goal to the minimum. Ask for the money you really need. Communicate with your backers. Post updates. Ask your backers to share your project. Send press release. Reviews, if they are good, help a lot and feel great. Come up with great rewords. I did doodles for my backers and sent out original art from the books.

SP!: WHAT IS COMICSFIX'S UNIQUE SELLING POINT?

Kristen: What sets us apart from other digital comic services is that we give readers the ability to binge-read comics and not think of dollars and dimes while doing it— pure joy of reading, none of the guilt. This opens up a pathway to discovery that you just don't get anywhere else. There is no financial risk when choosing to read a new and awesome comic, giving our users the same freedom and wonder of perusing their local library for books.

Felix: Absolutely. We are the least expensive and most convenient way to read comic books and graphic novels. Our membership fees are negligible when you see our library

today and the way it is expanding into tomorrow. You read one good graphic novel, of which we have so many, and you have already paid for your membership this month. Price and multitude of quality books: this is our winning strategy.

SP!: HAVE—OR WILL—EITHER OF YOU BE PUBLISHING COMICS ON COMICSFIX?

Felix: Of course! Exclusively I might add.

SP!: YOUR SITE DOESN'T HAVE A SEARCH FACILITY. WAS THIS A CONSCIOUS DECISION (TO STOP PEOPLE FROM ONLY LOOKING UP THINGS THEY HAD ALREADY HEARD OF)? IS IT SOMETHING YOU WOULD CONSIDER ADDING AS MORE BOOKS ARE ADDED TO YOUR ROSTER?

Felix: Search is going to be available in the next round of updates.

SP!: WAS IT DIFFICULT TO SET UP THE COMPANY? WAS THERE A LOT OF HELP AND ADVICE AVAILABLE?

Felix: It is very difficult, but when taken step-by-step, is very achievable. People on our team are very accomplished in marketing, tech, and business. We support each other, share knowledge with each other, and it works for us.

SP!: DID YOU DO A LOT OF MARKET RESEARCH INTO THE COMPETITION AND THE MARKET?

Felix: All the time. Market research is what drives many of our decisions. We compete not only with other digital comics platforms. We compete with TV, books, internet; we compete for people's free time. We want our users to choose us when it comes to how to spend their downtime.

SP!: HOW MANY BOOKS DO YOU CURRENTLY HAVE AVAILABLE TO VIEW ON COMICSFIX?

Kristen: We currently have over 30,000 pages of content and over 300 publishers, with books ranging from the experimental fringe to literary crossovers, zombies of every breed to laugh out loud comedy, action and adventure to historical biographies, manga, webcomics, kid and teen books, and more. We believe we are at a very good starting point and have something for everyone.

Felix: Every week we add new publishers and process new amazing books.

SP!: ARE THEY ALL SMALL PRESS?

Felix: Not at all. We have signed larger publishers and are in various stages of working out deals with other well-knowns.

SP!: HOW DOES IT WORK FROM A SUBSCRIBER'S POV?

Kristen: Our books are available to paid members only. But we do offer a 14-day free trial, plenty of time to get the idea and see how fantastic ComicsFix is. Our members have a choice. They can read books on their desktops, or download an app for an iPad, an Android tablet or a phone. The app for Kindle will roll out soon as well. With an app, you do not have to be online to read. You can download a few books to your device before heading out and you are free to read comics anywhere your busy life takes you.

SP!: WHO CAN PUBLISH ON COMICSFIX?

Kristen: Everyone. If your books display quality craftsmanship, artistic integrity, and solid writing, they are welcome at ComicsFix. Our current submission guidelines are pretty loose. As long as your work is not blatantly obscene, explicitly sexual in nature, or hateful, we'd love to have you. On rare occasions, we may turn a book away for being low-quality (although it pains us to do so), but we have been lucky to see very few such books.

SP!: HOW DOES A PUBLISHER GO ABOUT GETTING THEIR COMIC ONTO COMICSFIX?

Kristen: We've tried to make the process as painless as possible. The first step is creating a publisher account at www.comicsfix.com/publish. After that, the upload process is self-explanatory, but we are always available to answer questions. Our FAQ page has most of the answers about all the angles of being a publisher on ComicsFix.

SP!: WHAT FORMAT DO PUBLISHERS NEED TO SUBMIT COMICS IN?

Felix: PDF file. Very similar to what you would send to a printer, only no bleeds. If you do not have the technical skills to put together a file in the correct way, we can help.

SP!: WHAT ABOUT WEBCOMIC PUBLISHERS?

Kristen: Of course! We welcome comics from all walks of life. Webcomic publishers tend to compile their series into volumes and that's what is submitted to us, so it ends up reading just like a standard comic.

SP!: CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR "PAYOUT SHARE PERCENTAGE" SYSTEM?

Felix: We designed it based on many profit sharing models out there. We collect membership fees, pay our bills and marketing costs (15 percent on average), and we share the rest with the publishers 50/50. Each publisher has a dashboard with his/her books' readership stats. The publisher is paid out based on the number of times each page of their book is read. Publishers with more books,

of course, get more money. Almost all of our share, we put back into the development of Comicsfix. Our investors are not in a hurry to see their money back. This allows us room for constant growth, which is great for all of us.

Extract from the Comicsfix website:

We collect monthly fees from our members. After paying our bills, (hosting, payment processors fees, marketing and other costs) the money that's left gets split in half between ComicsFix and book owners. The book owners part distributed based on the readership each book gets from our paying members (not members on free trial period, other book owners, etc.).

In layman's terms: the more readers your books attract, the more money you get. Each book is destined to perform differently, but we estimate that on average 1000 readings of a 24 pages comic can generate around $20. A mini-series or a graphic novel can make $100 to $150 per 1000 readings. If we reach our goal of 100,000 domestic and international subscribers for the first year, and continue to grow, that is many thousand of readers for your books all year around, resulting in thousands of dollars for a publisher with a popular series. Compare that to the pennies that video or music services pay out to their artists.

SP!: HOW DO YOU MARKET YOUR SERVICE?

Felix: We have an amazing marketing team with many years of online sales experience. We heavily rely on social networking and interaction with our followers. We are building an affiliate program to give people the opportunity to make money with us. Finally, we see our publishers as a super-effective outreach force. Between all of them, there are millions of fans, many of which can be converted into members. We develop countless incentives for our publishers to take an active role in bringing members in.

SP!: WILL COMICSFIX BE ATTENDING ANY SHOWS?

Kristen: Over the past year, we have travelled across the country (and globe), attending conventions to reach out to publishers and fans alike.

Felix: We'll keep on doing it as much as possible. Any convention is a chance to meet new creators, potential members. Conventions inspire us—to see so many people united by a love of comics is amazing. We are lucky to have the investors that we have right now, but they are more marketing and business people, and know nothing of comics and the potential of its community. I love to take them to the shows. They see the size of the shows and the attendance and they get very optimistic about their investment.

SP!: DO YOU THINK THE INTERNET HAS MADE IT EASIER FOR PEOPLE TO SELF PUBLISH, AND DISTRIBUTE THEIR SELF-PUBLISHED WORK?

Kristen: Definitely. Social media websites give publishers a fantastic (and let's not forget free) way to market and brand themselves as artists. Not to mention, the possibility of funding your own project has never been easier with crowd-funding websites like Kickstarter and Indiegogo.

Felix: To all new publishers who consider bringing their books to ComicsFix: our social media channels are for you to use. Even if it is not related to ComicsFix. We help to spread the word about your new work, and crowd-funding campaigns. We are not just a platform, we are your support team. We were among the backers of almost every Kickstarter campaign run by our publishers.

SP!: DO YOU THINK THE NUMBER OF SELF PUBLISHED COMICS, PRINT-ON-DEMAND COMICS, DIGITAL COMICS AND WEB COMICS MAKES IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR INDIVIDUAL CREATORS TO PROMOTE AND MARKET THEIR WORK?

Kristen: It is hard, no doubt. There are tons of indie creators out there and because of that, it is easy for them to get looked over by readers BUT the community of self-publishers is such a unique one in the way that we all promote one another. We want to maximize the potential of cross-promotion by giving a home for every self-publisher to share.

SP!: HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU THINK IT IS FOR CREATORS TO HAVE THEIR WORK IN BRICKS-AND-MORTAR SHOPS AS WELL AS ONLINE?

Felix: It is very personal. Some people see it as a symbolic accomplishment to see their books on the shelf of a real store. From our experience, local stores will find a place for your book if you ask them. But with so many outlets online, I am talking print and digital, shops are not a must, unless it is a shop that promotes community engagement and supports local artists.

SP!: IS THERE ANYTHING YOU'D LIKE TO ADD THAT WE HAVEN'T COVERED?

Felix: I just want to take this as an opportunity to thank the publishers who came on board with such enthusiasm and without reservations. Nine months ago, we had nothing but an exciting idea. Still, many creators ventured to take those first steps with us on this journey. And today, we have the technology, an amazing library, a dedicated team, and one amazing group of creators, writers, artists, and publishers behind us. We are honored by your commitment. We are amazed by your books every day. We are inspired by you. Many of you are becoming personal friends. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. We are always looking for new books. So, if you feel like ComicsFix is a good home for your work, join our family today.

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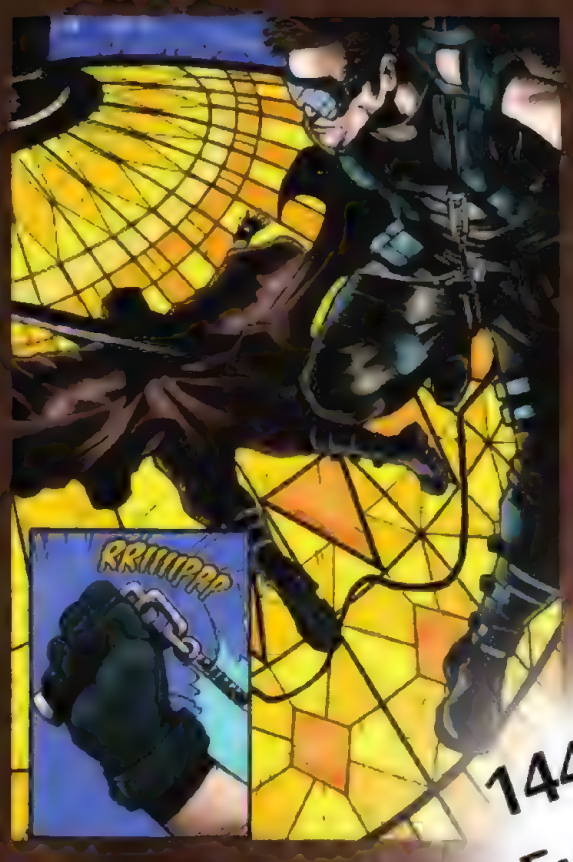

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"God, is this comic ever good!"
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Sara Kareem

"HOW DO YOU BID FAREWELL TO SOMEONE YOU LOVE?

"THE ONLY ONE IN THE WORLD TO YOU ...

"THERE AREN'T WORDS ENOUGH.

"HE WAS SLIPPING AWAY, AND ALL I COULD DO WAS CRADLE HIM."

HOLD ON, HAKIM! YOU CAN'T LEAVE... NOT LIKE THIS!

IT IS... MY TIME...RAKAN! YOU KNOW... WHAT YOU MUST DO!

BE STRONG! CARRY ON...MY LEGACY!

AS A CRIPPLED CHILD, RAKAN WITNESSED A BARBARIAN ATTACK ON HIS NOMADIC TRIBE. AS HE WONDERED HELPLESSLY IN THE DESERT, HE ENCOUNTERED GRAVE DANGERS, UNTIL HE WAS EVENTUALLY SAVED BY A SABRETOOTH. THE BEAST PRACTICALLY RAISES RAKAN, ALONG WITH HER OWN CUB, ARAMEH! AS THE YEARS GO BY, RAKAN AND ARAMEH BOND TOGETHER, AND BECOME THE BEST OF FRIENDS.

RAKAN
SABRETOOTH
- THE ORIGINS OF RAKAN -

©April. 2005

SNEAK PEEK!

"MY MENTOR AND MOST TRUSTED FRIEND."

IN HIS TEENS, RAKAN ENCOUNTERS AN OLD MYSTICAL MAN, SHEIKH NASSER, IN AN UNKNOWN OASIS. THE OLD MAN TEACHES RAKAN THE ANCIENT SECRETS OF SHEBA WHICH COMBINE THE USE OF MARTIAL ARTS WITH TOLERANCE AND WISDOM. AFTER YEARS OF TRAINING HIS BODY, MIND AND SOUL, RAKAN FINALLY BECOMES READY TO FACE THE WORLD AGAIN.

RAKAN EMBARKS ON A CONTINUOUS QUEST TO FULFIL HIS MASTER'S DYING WISH: TO FIND THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE SHEIKH'S KIDNAPPED DAUGHTER, REEM, AND TO RELEASE HER FROM CAPTIVITY. WIELDING THE SWORD OF MAJEEDO, RAKAN WANDERS THE ANCIENT LANDS SEARCHING FOR REEM. IN DOING SO, HE FACES MORTAL ARMIES, DARK FORCES, WIZARDS, MONSTERS AND DRAGONS ALONG THE WAY!

BY EVERY BONE IN MY BODY, I SWEAR IT!

"HIS LEGACY...IT MADE ME THINK OF MY OWN...

AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY FROM CLOUD 9 COMIX ON IOS, ANDROID AND KINDLE FIRE

SNEAK PEEK!

"...MY EARLY BEGINNINGS."

"A DESERT TRIBE FAR REMOVED IN SPACE AND TIME...

AS LONG AS WE STAY CLOSE TO THE FOOD SOURCE, WE SHOULD BE FINE!

"A NOW EXTINCT TRIBE."

AND WHAT OF THESE RUMORS THAT SPREAD LIKE WILD FIRE?

...BARBARIAN TRIBES STORMING DOWN FROM THE NORTH AND LAYING WASTE TO ALL?

JUST THAT, MIHRAN... RUMORS!

"YOU SEE, THOUGH MY FATHER DID NOT WANT TO ADMIT IT, THERE WAS SUBSTANCE TO THOSE RUMORS."

RAKAN, COME TO BED.

IF YOU LISTEN TO THEM, YOU'LL BE UP ALL NIGHT!

"MY MOTHER... EVER THE WATCHFUL EYE AND THE GENTLE HEART."

AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY FROM CLOUD 9 COMIX ON IOS, ANDROID AND KINDLE FIRE

RAKAN! WAKE UP BOY!!!

"I WAS AWAKENED THAT NIGHT BY MY FATHER'S IMPASSIONED PLEAS!

THE CAMP IS UNDER ATTACK!

BUT WHO?! HOW?!

"I COULD TELL BY THE TREMOR IN HIS VOICE AND THE TEARS IN MY MOTHER'S EYES, SOMETHING WAS GRAVELY WRONG."

"IN THAT MOMENT, MY WORLD WAS PLUNGED INTO UPHEAVAL...

*THE SCOUT BETRAYED US!

HE FLED WITHOUT ALERTING US!

"MONGOLS... THE BARBARIAN TRIBES... NOT JUST A RUMOR AFTER ALL!

"THEY HAD THE SUPERIORITY OF NUMBERS AND WEAPONS, COUPLED WITH THE ADVANTAGE OF SURPRISE!

HIYAAAAGH!!!

AIIIIIIEEEEEEEE!!!

RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!!!

DRBK! DRBK! DRBK!

"THEY ATTACKED US WHILE WE SLEPT!"

SNEAK PEEK!

AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY FROM CLOUD 9 COMIX ON IOS, ANDROID AND KINDLE FIRE

SNEAK PEEK!

COME BOY! WE *DON'T* STAND A *CHANCE* FIGHTING THEM!

WE *HAVE TO* FLEE!

NO, YOU'RE NOT *GETTING* THEM *YOU* SOULLESS MONSTER!

GRRRRRRR!!!

STAY *BEHIND ME!*

NEEEEEEEGH!!!

AHHHHH!!

EH—?!

RUN BOY! RUN UNTIL YOUR *LEGS* GIVE OUT!!!

"I DID WHAT HE SAID...I RAN! THOUGH I COULDN'T SEE IT, I COULD HEAR MY FATHER'S **CRY** AS HE FOUGHT FOR HIS **LIFE** AND MINE

ARRRRRRGHHH!!!

AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY FROM CLOUD 9 COMIX ON IOS, ANDROID AND KINDLE FIRE

SNEAK PEEK!

"IT WOULD BE THE LAST I'D EVER HEAR FROM HIM OR MY TRIBE.

"BEING CRIPPLED DIDN'T STOP ME...I DROVE MYSELF TO THE POINT OF EXHAUSTION

"IN MY DELIRIUM, I IMAGINED THE RAIDERS SENDING OUT SCOUTS TO TRACK ME...

FOOOUUSH!

UHHHHH!

"...SO I DRAGGED ON."

"THEY HAD **TAKEN** EVERYONE ELSE. I'D **BE** DAMNED IF I'D LET **THEM** TAKE ME."

"A **SANDSTORM** PICKED UP AND SWEPT AWAY MY **FOOTPRINTS**.

"I WAS GLAD FOR IT...BUT PART OF ME WISHED IT WOULD SWEEP ME **AWAY** TOO

FOOOUUSH!

"THE THOUGHT OF BEING **ALONE** WAS ALMOST TOO MUCH TO BEAR."

AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY FROM CLOUD 9 COMIX ON IOS, ANDROID AND KINDLE FIRE

Victor Greywolf

Comic Stylings of Victor Greywolf

By: Mark Turner

Victor Greywolf was born in New York City on August 18, 1974, to parents who had immigrated from South America. His childhood saw him grow up in Queens, and Long Island, NY until, at the age of 16, he made the move to Chicago, IL. The many trials, tribulations and adventures that he experienced, during that time and since, have all served to forge his artistic identity, which he shares with the world through comics, film, music, art, and standup comedy. Victor Greywolf spent some time with Self Publisher! Magazine to share a bit about his latest comic, Hayoto, his comedy, and his career.

SP!: COMING FROM A BACKGROUND OF PERFORMANCE AND MEDIA PRODUCTION (CABLE), WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO CREATE A COMIC?

VG: Well, I haven't had a lot of tangible success in acting, or sports. I tried to get into competitive volleyball in 2011, as well as go-kart racing and, before that, Judo. I didn't get to the level that I wanted and I couldn't find a way to compete, so I had to try something different. After coming back from a brothel tour in Northern Nevada in 2008, and writing a script based on it, I needed to do something that worked with what I could do, and enjoy at the same time. Since I drew my comic books on and off, starting, I believe, in either 1986 or '87 (can't remember exactly), I just got into something I was able to do. Comic book drawing and writing… it just seemed to come naturally to me. Also, I grew up watching a lot of cartoons from various types of places (Warner Brothers, Filmation, RIP Lou Scheimer, Norm Prescott, William Hanna and Joseph Barbera.) I was also inspired by Charles Schulz, Arthur Rankin Jr, and Jules Bass, along with anime that I later saw in the early 90s (Ranma, Sailor Moon, Zillion, etc.) I have been an anime fan since 1992, when I started seeing them regularly on television. So, cartoons were ALWAYS an interest of mine. I guess they were an escape from the normal humdrum of everyday life and gave me something to develop an interest in.

SP!: DID YOU GROW UP READING COMICS?

VG: Not really. I mean, I did glance at them from time to time, but not until I was 14, when I saw a Batman comic book in a book store and glanced at some of the pictures, and I saw comic strips in other magazines (Playboy, Penthouse, Readers Digest, newspapers). And some super hero cartoons and movies. In a way, they were like comic books. But I didn't really draw any until, I believe either 1986 or 1987, when I watched the old black-and-white Superman series and the Fleischer cartoons, which inspired me to draw my first

comic. I don't recall the name of the first comic I drew, but it was the start of something wonderful and positive for me. I was always a good writer and writing was my first great thing, from what people told me, so I guess you could say it was inevitable.

SP!: DO YOU HAVE ANY FAVORITE COMICS NOW?

VG: Well, I never really got into them, but I just read whatever I can find, if the comic suits me. I guess Batman, and Punisher would probably come close, but it is not something I would read on a regular basis. However, I guess Batman... and Superman, since I saw them on TV the most, probably would be the closest, if I read comic books enough.

SP!: CAN YOU SHARE A BIT ABOUT YOUR BOOK HAYOTO? WHAT IT IS ABOUT?

VG: Well, the Hayoto series is about a victim and witness to a violent crime that happened in front of him. He then gets the desire to get even with those who committed the crime, and bring justice to victims such as himself. Hayoto is the anti-hero that I created in 1989, that another magazine, alt-variety did an interview with me on, entitled "Too much to say". The anti-hero was inspired by the movie Batman, and also from the video game "Double Dragon," as far as the look of the character. The name of the character came from a video game that I bought in April of 1989 entitled "Kenseiden," where the character's name was "Hayato,", but I misread it and thought it said "Hayoto,", and the name stuck, as far as inspiration for the name of my character. It was originally written as "Street Fighters," but I remembered Capcom had that title, so when I re-created it, I changed it to Hayoto.

SP!: WHAT INSPIRED THE IDEA FOR THE CHARACTER AND THE STORYLINE FOR ISSUE #1?

VG: Well, it was after I saw Dateline's To Catch a Predator and stories on the news in which they spoke of crimes that were similar to the show. I guess the scandals with the popes, along with Michael Jackson, were also the key inspirations for it.

MT: Issue #1 sees the organization NAMBLA cast as the antagonist for the hero. Was there a particular reason you chose to feature a fictionalized version of such a controversial group in your first comic book effort?

VG: They were the first to come to mind, as crimes such as this were seen on the news and newspapers were talking about things such as that. I guess that would be the closest to the truth. After seeing To Catch a Predator, that became the main inspiration for the issue, as far as the antagonist goes.

SP!: WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR "HAYOTO"?

VG: I am currently on Issue #5, which has one character who is a similar villain to Issue #1's; kind of like one of the unfound or one that got away. As the issue opens, he is contemplating revenge on Hayoto. The issue is halfway completed. I might do about ten or fifteen more, but not sure as of yet.

SP!: DO YOU SEE YOURSELF CREATING THIS AS AN ONGOING COMIC OR A LIMITED SERIES?

VG: I am not sure at this time. I might do one graphic novel and maybe end the series. Only time will tell. I do enjoy drawing it, don't get me wrong, but a lot of times, the ideas come so fast that it takes a while to complete an issue. But I love the work. I think a limited series might be more realistic at this time, but we shall see.

SP!: WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE WRITING AND ART ON THE TITLE?

VG: I do it all myself, 100 percent. That is why it takes me so long to finish an issue, but I enjoy the work. It is easier, I find, doing it all yourself. You tend to run into less problems than if you have people help you. Sure there will be more of an accomplishment, and issues get finished sooner, but there are also more disputes. So, considering the alternative, I do it all by myself.

SP!: NOW, YOU ALSO HAVE AN ALBUM OUT FOR YOUR STANDUP COMEDY WORK?

VG: Yes, I do. I have three all together. One is a two-CD set, but I haven't been able to release it as of yet. There is also one more on the way. It will be the first one in two years. I plan to record it sometime in maybe October or December. Maybe January; not sure as of yet. I am working on the material for it, as we speak.

SP!: WHO WOULD YOU SAY ARE SOME OF YOUR COMEDIC INSPIRATIONS?

VG: Laurel and Hardy, The Three Stooges, Andrew Dice Clay, Bill Cosby, Sam Kinison, Jackie Mason, and the late, great Jacob Cohen, aka Rodney Dangerfield. As far as a life influence, I would say FZ, aka Frank Zappa, and also, Hugh Hefner.

SP!: HOW WOULD YOU CATEGORIZE YOUR STANDUP STYLE?

VG: Kind of difficult to say at this time, but I would say, probably like a frustrated person who feels that life never gets them anywhere, no matter how hard they try. I have been told I am a combination of Sam Kinison, Andrew Dice Clay, a little bit of Jackie Mason, and Rodney Dangerfield, but most people compare my material to Rodney Dangerfield. He was my idol. I was so sad when he died.

SP!: ARTISTICALLY WOULD YOU SAY YOU IDENTIFY MORE WITH

THE STANDUP COMEDY, WRITING, OR ACTING SIDE OF YOUR CAREER?

VG: I wish I could say all three, but I would say, as much as I had some great memories doing standup, I don't think I identify with it too well, since my performances were not that great, but I did enjoy them enough to say I have a lot of great memories, and met a lot of great people. My performances are now limited to recording albums and one-person concerts (two of which won awards; one premiered in two festivals and won awards in three), one of which I am going to be shooting on the 8th and 29th of June of this year in a special location (no audience). As far as acting, I don't know if I would have a career in it, since I was in four movies (two were student films and two were B-movies or indie features), and none ever premiered anywhere, so I don't know if I could make it as an actor. I won an award for my own movies and a script I wrote in 1988, so I guess writing will be what I can identify with, since it was the one I was able to do the most with. It would be nice to be getting somewhere with the acting or comedy, but it hasn't really happened for me, unfortunately.

SP!: DO YOU REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME YOU PERFORMED STANDUP?

VG: I got into comedy after reading about Bill Cosby in 1984. The first time I performed standup that I can recall was in 1986 at a friend of mine's sister's birthday party. I wasn't that good, but I had fun. The first time I did it in front of strangers was June 2, 1999 at a Zanies in Vernon Hills, IL, then regularly on open mic nights from September 2, 1999 to September 26, 2005, and then again on November 28, 2006. After that, it was in 2012 at a local college near me. They stopped it in 2013. I haven't performed since.

SP!: COULD YOU SHARE WHAT THAT EXPERIENCE WAS LIKE?

VG: It was kind of fun performing in front of friends, but with strangers, it was a combination of a good memory and social awkwardness. But it was a great run overall. It even inspired a script I wrote based on my standup days, as well as other moments in my life from 1998 to 2004.

SP!: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THOSE CONSIDERING TAKING A STAB AT THE BUSINESS?

VG: Don't enter this business thinking you are going to strike it rich, if your secret desire is to have people like you the way you wish they would, or feeling like everyone is going to love you. Only enter it if you want to have fun and enjoyment, not for an income. Things DO happen, but many times, not the way you hope. Never get into this business if your pursuit is fame and fortune and never take rejection personally, since it will come back to haunt you in the long run. Keep things realistic and you can have a great life that most people will envy, but don't make people jealous, since it will always find a way to bite you in the ass. Also, never fear jealousy of people when you tell the truth about yourself, or hatred, since there will ALWAYS be someone out there who is going to envy you, or hate you, or wish whatever upon you for some reason or other. Remember, you are doing what you love and nobody can take that away from you, no matter how much they want to. You have to learn how not to fear not being loved by everyone. (Birth sign helps with that.) Just live your life, and know that what you do, if it satisfies you, is the most important thing. You can't depend on people to satisfy you; you have to learn how to be satisfied with what you are doing. When you have an achievement, remember it was something YOU earned, not what the people gave you.. As a wise man once told me, "There will be those who will love what you do, and those who won't. Enjoy the ones who do, and don't care for the ones who don't".

SP!: WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS FOR COMICS, COMEDY, AND YOUR MUSICAL PURSUITS?

VG: Well, I am not in music right now. I do plan on doing a holiday singing album as soon as I find a band, but as far as comics, I hope to finish number 5 and move onto other issues. As far as comedy, I am going to try to see if I can get my new standup comedy video finished and edited, submit it to a film festival, and get that next album done. I'm still seeking acting jobs and I completed a reading of a family-written children's book. I still plan to do low-budget movies, since comedy, drawing, and cinema (of all things) are in my blood. Might also do another tour, if I can, for film-making ,or another brothel tour in Southern Nevada. I have a voice-over CD and I will be making another one. Developed an interest in it, due to people telling me I read aloud very well. I developed this ability because I had to practice to cure a speech impediment as a kid, and it worked for me very well. I hope to get a chance to do voice-overs for cartoons, or something. I am also working on an audio instruction book for aspiring film makers, since I also briefly taught a class in Chicago in 2013. I might also get into karaoke. (Tried it once in a bowling alley in 2013.) Outside of that, I think life has bigger plans for me.

SP!: WHERE CAN THOSE INTERESTED IN FOLLOWING YOU AND YOUR WORK FIND YOU AND YOUR VARIOUS PROJECTS?

VG: I am currently looking into web sites that I can promote my art work on, once I figure out how to put my drawings on sites, but all I can say is follow me wherever you can. My IMDB will be the best source for the time being, or fans can reach me at: Victor Greywolf P.O. Box 2172, Palatine, IL 60078-2172

graphic illusions COMICS

IV
ARMAGEDDON

The Battle Begins...
August 2014

Coming to
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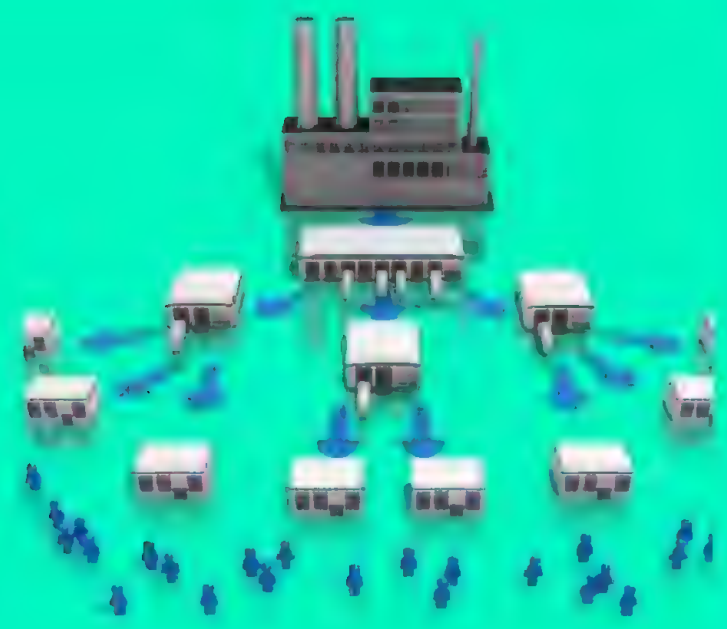
Distribution Alley

What is going right, and wrong, at distribution outlets



By: Ian Shires

I've been continuing to rock the boat out there on the distribution sea. Last year, it was a series of articles on is the distribution options available. This year, I took a look at what was popular at those distributors. But at this point, I think it would be more useful and interesting, if I took a more personal approach, and started looking directly at the things that catch my eye, good and bad, examine why they did, and continue challenging the status quo out there. So I'm calling my new series of columns Distribution Alley, I'm going to walk up and down it each month, and whether it's a book I saw or something I saw a distributor doing, I'm going to address it.

I wanted to go straight to the place that stirred the most chum in the water last month: Indyplanet (http://www.indyplanet.com/). They seem to have completely taken to heart my criticism regarding their faulty Popular Titles function and right now, on their homepage, they have a big announcement about how they are doing some major code re-working. They seem to have completely stripped out their template from their software and are digging deep. The current result is a simple list of new books, but we won't judge that. Let's give this distribution outlet, a very big "Keep an eye on this" to see what improvements come to be. I give them a lot of credit for not just staying the course in the face of criticism and for going ahead and making major changes. We'll be back to see how it all goes next month, but you, as a reader of SP! should stop in a few times before then just to watch it unfold.

So, I wanted to stop in at a site we are running an article on this month, ComicsFix (https://comicsfix.com/). Not yet having read that article as I write this, I have a feeling this website is not quite complete. It's initial to-the-reader display says unlimited comics and GNs, Request an Invite—meaning that you need to ask to be invited to sign up for a service that costs $10 a month. It's a little bit odd from the potential reader standpoint. There is a list that says "Your Reading List," which I would guess is a list of new titles if you're not logged in and don't have a list of your own yet. They bill it as a sort of Netflix for comics, so I'm taking my cues from having seen Netflix. The "about us" that explains things just a little bit is hidden all the way at the bottom of the page. There are top picks, which suggest there is an algorithm in here to keep track of what people read, but I can find no search function to help people contemplating signing up to see how many publishers and books are in here. And will they, like Netflix, occasionally eliminate books and series, to make way for others? Netflix, has never tried to be a complete "here's everything ever available," so how does that play out for small publishers? So, okay, I don't want to seem like I'm bashing something in my column while we run more in-depth into the concept in another column... so I'm going to hold out hope here. This website needs some very specific work. I hope the runners take this as advice and not as criticism. Can something like this WORK? Well, it's certainly possible. They seem to have a good number of books, many of which I have not seen before. How they address readership acquisition is going to be a big part of how ComicsFix goes from here.

The theme we seem to be following this month is development of distribution spots. I stopped in at Comic FLEA Market, a spot I have not talked about in a few issues. I really like how the immediate impression you get here, is 100 percent patriotic, 4th of July. They took all their patriotic books, feature them, and it comes across great. From a shopper's perspective, that lets me know the company is on top of current events. It made me want to look around and learn more. So, in the ABOUT section, we learn that this is the online store of a printing service, and that the service now includes sales to comic book stores as part of its options. And it tells you the basics of how their system works. Great. Browsing the book groupings, we have New, we have Limited Edition (I looked at a few; these are POD books, where the publishers have chosen to limit how many copies will be in a printing. I like it as an idea, but question the actual need.)—which brought me to think, OH, they are not offering ANY Digital copies here. So, where Drive-thru (http://comics.drivethrustuff.com/) continues to be my fave place for digital, this

place has caught my eye as a great place for physical copies. (I still refuse to print with Drive-Thru, because they require blank inside covers and interior pages. I would never do that to a book I was printing.) EXCLUSIVE books caught my eye, until I saw that it was just Exclusive cover versions. Then I noticed something else: they are running on ProStores software, which I'd heard was shutting down after being bought by Ebay. And sure enough, a click over confirmed it, so this store is looking at being forced over to Magento software after the New Year, because Ebay bought them too. I am sure that that is going to change how the site looks and runs, so there is change ahead for them. They seem to be doing a LOT of things right here. I do question the decision not to address digital readers, but maybe they will as they go through the coming migration to new software. Something we'll have to keep an eye on here in Distribution Alley.

I could go on, and probably should, but I also don't want to go too crazy with this first column. We're going to have lots more coming, so I am going to START next month where I'm leaving off here, wanting to take a real good look at the British indie giant, Comicsy (http://www.comicsy.co.uk/) I can foreshadow a bit by saying that everyone else can probably learn a lot looking at their setup. See you next month!

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Aghori Shaivite

By: Steven Pennella

Deep within the realms of cyberspace and print-on-demand, there exists a multiverse of the melancholic, the comedic, the beautiful, and the horrific. This domain is known to all as the Aghoriverse. The mission I've chosen to accept is to interview the man behind the universe. Aghori Shaivite is the creative force behind the Aghoriverse. He's an independent comic book writer, short story writer, and artist.

Aghori was kind enough to answer a few questions about his universe, his inspirations, his characters, and his concepts. Without further ado, I am happy to present this interview to all of our loyal readers and supporters of independent creators. Let us commence!"

SP!: GIVE ME THE AGHORIVERSE ELEVATOR SPEECH.

AS: The Aghoriverse is a fun multiverse I created a few years ago. I love writing different stories, creating different characters, and playing with different plot lines. After I came up with my pen name, Aghori Shaivite, I eventually started to play with different themes and ideas. That's when the Aghoriverse came about. I wanted to create a multiverse for my stories that was inherently evil, sort of like what you'd get from Stephen King when he writes stories in Castle Rock or The Dark Tower: places and realms interconnected with a strange, dark thread.

In the Aghoriverse, I have a few different focuses at the moment. Probably at the head of the list is Empress, a comic I'm doing with Chuck Amadori, Marcelo Salaza, and Matheus Bronca. It's a story about a Hollywood starlet that goes missing and a private investigator who has to figure out what happened to her. I created the main character of the comic, Zia, and was heavily inspired by the Amelia Earhart disappearance, which intrigued me as a kid. Chuck wrote the first four stories and I'm writing the next four. He's a brilliant writer. Another comic I'm excited about is a comic for my character The Brain Surgeon. Wendigo Comics is managing and releasing that project. Wendigo is headed by Jacob Fairy, who is a cool guy. Besides that, you have my personal baby, Super Inc. Villain's Edition, which features all the crazy characters I created.

SP!: EMPRESS IS BASED ON AMELIA EARHART. WHO DO YOU MODEL YOUR OTHER CHARACTERS AFTER? DO YOU HAVE PARTICULAR ACTORS, FRIENDS, OR FICTIONAL PEOPLE AS INSPIRATION?

AS: Most of my characters just came from themes. I wanted a military-themed villain, so I made Colonel Cruel. I wanted a schizophrenic villain obsessed with cartoons, so I created Mont E. Cartoon. I wanted a superhero that was inspired by Stoic philosophy, like Marcus Aurelius and Seneca, so I made The Stoic.

A few of my characters came from dreams. Magik Manx, one of the first characters I created for The Aghoriverse, was this magician I saw in a dream. I dreamed of a very mischievous magician that played dark pranks on people... this creepy, old wrinkled guy with fading blonde hair and clear blue eyes... very vaudeville looking, but classic, like he belonged in a dead era. I've always liked creepy circus-like characters, so he fit well into my universe.

Cap'N Death, one of the main characters I'm working on now, came from so many influences, including my love of mob movies. I wanted mobsters and Cap'N Death was the ultimate mobster. He was also inspired by

death cults, like the Indian thugees, Kali worshippers and murderers that saw death as a philosophical concept. I wanted to create a villain that embodies death, and sees death as this eternal, almost reverent thing, but takes it literally to the point where he kills people. He belongs to the Saints of Death, a crime syndicate and mob that also runs on the same weird "death is divine" concepts. The only thing is, Cap'N Death is the most ruthless and scary guy of them all. I gave him a bride, The Eternal Bride of Death, who wears a kimono and a skull mask. Ever since I was a kid, I've loved Japanese culture, especially geishas, ninjas, and samurai, so she is heavily inspired by Japan.

I based the look of the Saints of Death's main boss, Simon Deathtrap, on Aleister Crowley, mainly because I wanted a creepy looking, bald, and old British guy. The infamous picture I based him off of is in the public domain. Other than Simon's image, his personality is based more on 60s cheese. I wanted a guy that did deathtraps and stuff like The Avengers' villains. Noir, pulp fiction stuff. I like to add weird, campy elements to my stories. Since I grew up watching the corniest, most fun shows from the 60s in syndication, I like to take that classic nostalgic campiness and mix it with dark, creepy elements.

SP!: ONCE UPON A TIME, YOU WERE A SELF-DESCRIBED SHY, INTROSPECTIVE WRITER. HOW DID INTROSPECTION HELP YOU TO OBSERVE THE REAL WORLD AND MAKE YOU A BETTER WRITER?

AS: I've always been an introspective person. I come up with a lot of ideas and stories and I love creating. I think a lot. My introspection has helped me pull ideas from the real world for my fiction. As for observing the real world, I could use a lot of help there! The real world can be pretty strange to figure out. When it comes to writing, I guess introspection has made me a harder critic on myself and more focused on growing in my writing... so hopefully, that's helped me get better.

SP!: WHAT GOT YOU INTO WRITING COMICS? ARE YOU A PROFESSIONAL WRITER DURING THE DAY?

AS: A few years ago, I had a friend that used to make self-published zines—xeroxed, local stuff. He was very DIY in his approach to art and writing. This rubbed off on me heavily. I also did music with this friend and we had a pretty DIY approach to our music, as well. This all inspired me in my writing. I wanted to make my own stories freely, under my control, and for my entertainment. I created a character named Serpent King and started to make comics for him. Dark fantasy/sci-fi stuff. That was my first dive into this comic path, probably even a year or two before Aghori was born.

I do write professionally as a part time job, but it is not my full time day-job. More like an after-hours job. I write for some comic publishers and I also write short stories on commission, which is a lot of fun. I love my day job as well, but I keep it separate from my creative life as a writer.

SP!: WHO ARE YOUR GREATEST INFLUENCES AS A WRITER?

AS: Stephen King. You can tell he loves writing with every line he jots. Huge inspiration. Anthony Burgess was the first writer to really influence me. I read Clockwork Orange when I was in high school and I was blown away by his creativity with language, using Russian for a faux-futuristic teenager slang. Clockwork Orange was the first dystopian type of work I ever got into, and I base my comic collection "Super Inc. Villain's Edition" in a dystopian future. Clive Barker also influenced me heavily. In high school, I read The Great and Secret Show, so I've been in love with his creativity ever since. Clive influences my love for the dark and surreal, mixed with romance and sensuality. He's awesome for that. Dostoyevsky is one of my favorites. The Brothers Karamazov is amazing and has been inspiring when it comes to character development and fleshing out my characters. My latest influence has been Tad Williams, who is probably one of the best writers I've ever read when it comes to character development in a storyline with multiple characters and cliffhangers. I've never been so entertained by a book series before reading Otherland. Walter Jon Williams is amazing and I'm a huge Alan Moore fan.

SP! SINCE YOU MENTIONED MUSIC, HAVE YOU CONSIDERED THE POSSIBILITY OF MOTION COMICS OR INTERACTIVE COMICS, WITH YOUR MUSIC AS THE SOUNDTRACK?

AS: I have not thought about motion or interactive comics at this point. I don't really know if I'm into motion comics, though I've read a few... At this point, I prefer to flip to page by page, instead of moving panel by moving panel, whether digitally or in print.

I have asked my former bandmates if they would mind me using our music in commercials I make for YouTube. They gave me permission and they support my comics, but I think it would reveal too much of my personal life and identity to use our music. I like my privacy for now.

SP!: HOW DO YOU FIND YOUR ARTISTS? WHAT KIND OF PERSON DO YOU WORK BEST WITH? DOES PERSONALITY MEAN AS MUCH AS ABILITY?

AS: I mostly find the artists I work with through DeviantArt, which is a great art community. I found one of my favorite artists, Pert Badillo, through Freelanced.com and he's great. I work best with people that are dependable. Things are more smooth when you can depend on someone and they don't disappear for an unreasonable amount of time. Personality is important, along with ability. It's way more fun to work with people that are easy to get along with.

SP!: WHY SUPERVILLAINS? ANYTHING TO DO WITH INTROSPECTION, OR IS IT A CASE OF LIVING VICARIOUSLY THROUGH YOUR CHARACTERS?

AS: Ever since I was a kid, I've always liked supervillains and anti-heroes, or badasses.

Villains are fun to write for and more entertaining to me. They are the cause of conflict in a story and they stir things up. You can do so much with them because they are more chaotic and break rules. I don't live vicariously through them. I curse, I drink, I laugh at bad jokes—I work my own amount of evil into the world. Although I don't live through my villainous characters, I do have fun writing them. Not sure if they have anything to do with my introspective nature.

SP!: WHAT VENUES DO YOU USE TO MARKET YOURSELF? (E.G. WEBSITES. SOCIAL MEDIA?)

AS: Facebook, Twitter, and DeviantArt, more than anything.

SP!: DO YOU EVER USE COMMERCIAL TOOLS TO IMPROVE YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE? (E.G. ADWORDS, TWITTER FOR BUSINESS, BOOSTING FACEBOOK POSTS)

AS: I've used Facebook groups, Twitter shares, and DeviantArt posts for my promotion online. But I need to research way more about promotion.

SP!: DO YOU FIND PEOPLE ASKING FOR PHYSICAL BOOKS OR ARE THEY OKAY WITH DIGITAL ONLY?

AS: I have had a few people ask for physical comics and even my literary books. Luckily, Ka-Blam and Amazon's CreateSpace have print editions of my work possible for a self-publishing DIY guy like myself. I like print-on-demand, because it allows a regular Joe like me to sell books without losing money.

SP!: WHERE IS THE AGHORIVERSE HEADED IN FIVE YEARS? ANY THOUGHTS ABOUT LICENSING OR SOLICITING THE CHARACTERS TO OTHER PUBLISHERS OR MEDIA OUTLETS?

AS: That depends! I am pretty cautious. I don't want to lose control of my characters and the world I've created. I've read too many horror stories, I guess. I grew up in the 90s and heard about so many disasters, mainly with musicians, of people signing crappy deals and losing so much, from control to artistic license. People that were on the rise, maybe even made a lot of money, but didn't make what they should have, or lost the characters they made to the companies they worked for. The birth of Image Comics came from disgruntled creators feeling abused by publishers and outlets. I'm pretty creator-driven... Just to be humorous, I think, hmm... would I let Cap'N Death get dressed up in a tutu and remade by a big company to star in Puffy Wuffy Fwiends? Or let my one of my characters get an emo vampire makeover? No... unless I really wanted them to be that way and it wasn't some guy or corporation telling me that's what's going to sell.

One of the guys I do music with has always told me, "If anyone ever refers to our music as 'the product', I'm out the door". I have that kind of spirit as well. I started this company with a passion to make my own stories, not anyone else's. I'm not against letting a bigger company support my vision and promote me if they are creator-driven. If a company wants to really get behind what I'm doing and not destroy it, I encourage it! Nowadays, there are way more corporations that are fair to creators and I'm all for them! But the Aghoriverse has to be Aghori's Multiverse, not "A Corporation Pulling Aghori's Stringsverse". I would rather make raw, homegrown, fun comics that my heart is behind than something super-polished and eye-catching that has absolutely nothing to do with me.

SP!: WHERE CAN PEOPLE PURCHASE YOUR BOOKS?

AS: http://www.indyplanet.com/front/?product_brand=AghoriShaivite

http://indiecomicstracker.com/discover-by-publisher/cruel-productions/

http://www.amazon.com/Aghori-Shaivite/e/B00I8XIR9C/ref=sr_ntt_srch_lnk_1?qid=1401666885&sr=8-1

SP!: WHERE ELSE IS YOUR WEB PRESENCE FELT?

AS: www.aghoriverse.com

aghori.shaivite on Facebook

SP!: ANY LAST WORDS?

AS: My friend Chuck Amadori also asked me to plug the company of the artists working on Empress... It's called Pencil Blue.

Marcelo Salaza and Matheus Bronca work form Pencil Blue Studios. Pencil Blue Studios is managed by Marcelo and he can pair people with great artists for reasonable rates.

MobiCon 2014 Convention Report

By: Jennifer Vanderbeek

When you hear about a comic or fan convention in the southeastern United States, if you know of any at all, you're probably thinking about MegaCon in Orlando, Florida, or the mammoth DragonCon in Atlanta, Georgia. Both of those conventions are huge, media-centric events that bring out both casual enthusiasts and the hardcore fangirls and guys. Fortunately for those of us in this area, these two conventions are not our only choices. There are a number of small-to-medium-sized conventions in the southeast that can fill in the gaps for those of us looking for places to meet fellow fans, as well as introduce (and sell) our creations to them.

The problem with the larger, media-focused cons for the self-publishing creator—at least, from my experience—is that many attendees are looking primarily for two things:

Properties they already know and love (so the "Big 2" Marvel and DC stables; popular anime/manga titles; fan works of television shows, video games, and movies; or even the mid-sized self-publishers that have built a large fan-following)

Pictures and autographs with high-level media guests

The point being, if you are a new producer looking to build a fan-base, these cons might leave you a little unfulfilled. Which is why I adore the small-to-mid-sized conventions along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts; conventions run by the fans, for the fans, and willing to support independent creators alongside larger properties.

One such con is MobiCon, the annual May convention of Mobile, Alabama fandom enthusiasts, which is just finishing its 17th year.

This year's convention actually presented two hurdles to the longstanding con: a change of venue and a change of date (to Memorial Day weekend). The change in venue was much-needed—when I attended MobiCon several years ago, they were busting at the seams of their original hotel, so the move to larger digs downtown was truly a step in the right direction. And even though date and venue changes can have a negative effect on attendance rates that first year, the word on the floor by Sunday afternoon was that they'd passed the 1,000 memberships mark—a testament to the community they've built over the years.

As with most mid-sized cons of their ilk, MobiCon did have a couple of lovely media guests, the usual amount of comics and memorabilia shops in attendance, and a number of authors and artists. I was happy

to see that most of the latter two categories were largely creator-owned properties, many of whom were self-publishers—some just starting out and others veterans of the convention circuit. Because of the even mix of options, between gaming, several panel rooms, and the dealer room, attendees had plenty of time to not just walk the dealer room once or twice on a quick pass, but actually stop and chat with vendors and creators (the hands-down advantage of the smaller conventions) without being rushed to the next big event.

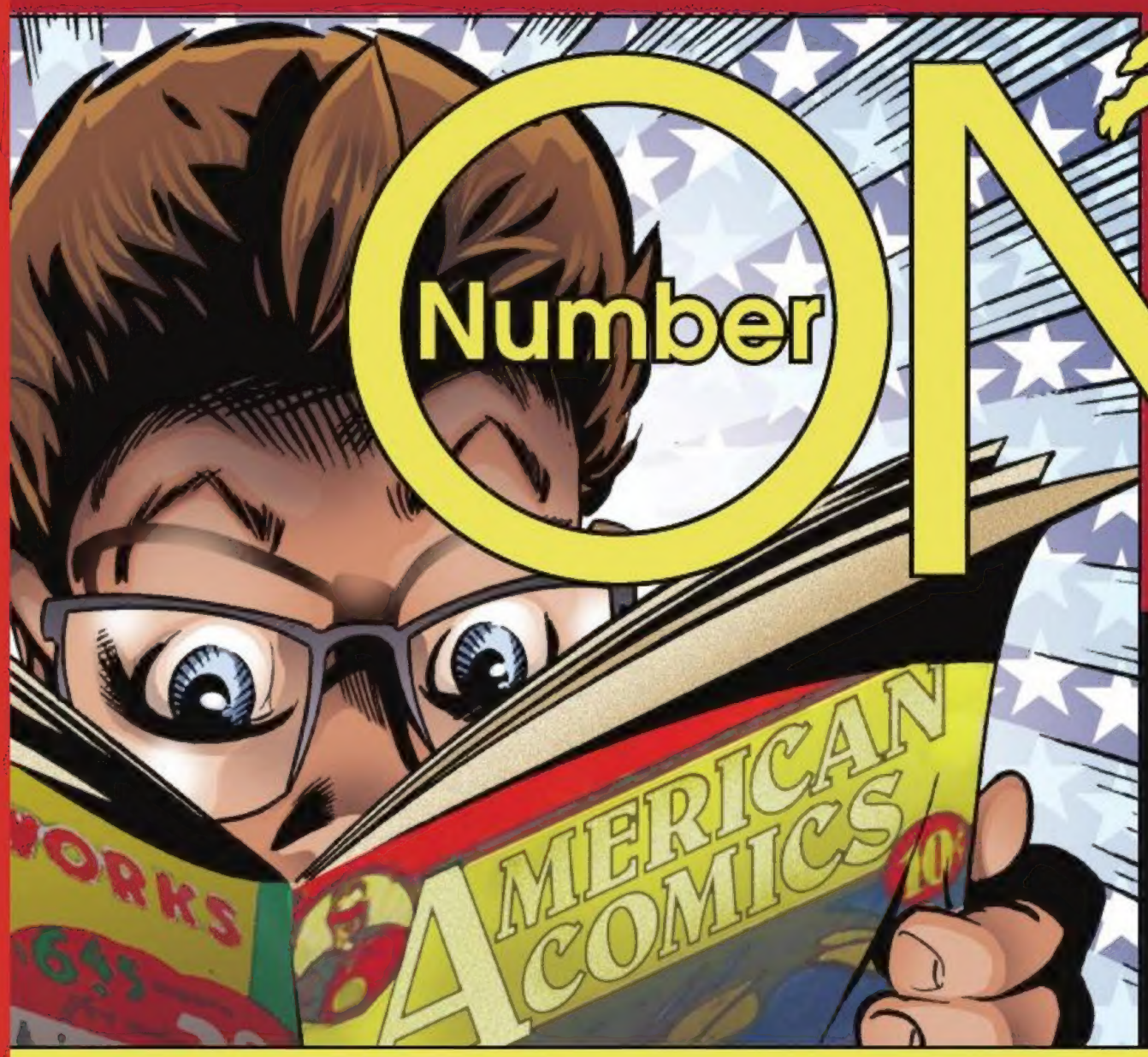
While it was my second time at MobiCon, it was my first with the cookbook, as well as my first time as a guest. Because of proximity, though, several people who stopped by my table remembered me from February's Pensacon (Pensacola, Florida). While I'm still getting used to guesting at conventions, MobiCon adds the especially nice touch of hosting a Meet the Guests panel the first evening of the convention with entertainment and refreshments, giving each guest a chance to introduce themselves in whatever way they deem fit. It was also a nice chance to chat with a couple of my fellow

guests who weren't adjacent to my table (the "downside" of working a convention being less time to circulate, but it's the "price" we pay for being available to attendees). My sales for the weekend were steady and met my goal (I consider it a good convention if I can bring one less box of books home than I arrived with, and a box is 25-30 copies depending on how well it's packed). The three panels I led (including one on working with printers (see my article from SP! 64), were well-attended, with good questions asked—leading a panel is one of the few reasons I'll leave my table during a convention and it almost always pays off in at least one sale.

The other reason I'll leave my table in the middle of the day is to talk with other conventions that might be promoting. There's a kinship among several of the conventions along the Gulf coast (Biloxi, New Orleans, Mobile, etc.) and I was able to line up two more con spots before the end of the weekend. I won't even pretend that it wasn't flattering to approach one convention table and ask if they'd be interested at having me at their convention in October and have the neighboring table ask to have me at their show next March.

I'm not in the habit of asking my fellow vendors how much they've sold during the convention, but I will usually ask some how they did in a more general sense. While some did better than others, all seemed to have the right attitude: it's not always as much about sales numbers as it is about meeting people and making connections. Sometimes it takes more than one show to get a customer to buy, but each time they see you they get a little more comfortable with the idea. Self-promotion, like all aspects of self-publishing, is a marathon, not a sprint, and I like to think of conventions like MobiCon as water stations along the way.

Jennifer "Scraps" Vanderbeek (nee Walker) is the author and illustrator of What to Feed Your Raiding Party, the comic book cookbook for gamers.



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